A

SERMON

PREACH'D at the

ORDINATION

OF THE

Rev. Mr. THOMAS AMORY,

AND

Mr. WILLIAM CORNISH,

At *Taunton*, *Somerſet*, Oct. 7, 1730.

IN

Which, among other Things, the true Notion of preaching CHRIST, and the *Decay of the Diſſenting Intereſt* are briefly conſider'd;

With a large

PREFACE concerning the Foundations of Morality, and the excellent Morals of the Goſpel.

By *HENRY GROVE.*

To which is added, a

CHARGE

Delivered on the ſame Occaſion.

By *JOHN MILNER.*

Both publiſh'd at the Requeſt of the Miniſters then preſent.

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THE PREFACE.

HAVING *in the following diſcourſe, recommended to miniſters the inſiſting, as they have opportunity, on* the reaſonableneſs of the chriſtian religion, *particularly of its* precepts, *I thought it would not be altogether foreign to my deſign, if I ſpent a few pages by way of preface, in ſhewing that* morality is originally founded in the nature and relations of reaſonable beings; *and that* it is one great excellency and commendation of the religion of our bleſſed Saviour, that it hath given us a ſcheme of the pureſt, the moſt uſeful, and the moſt perfect morality that ever was.

By morality, *I would not have my readers to imagine I underſtand any ſuch low accompliſhment as owes its riſe wholly or chiefly to the dictates of* civil prudence, *or the rules of* external decorum. *I am contented that they call this* pagan morality, *or by any other name that they pleaſe, ſo it be not pretended that this is all the morality that* reaſon *leads men to practiſe. Theſe things are good in their kind, and by no means to be neglected: but they come very ſhort of the morality I am here ſpeaking of; which, according to my notion of it, ſignifies* ſuch a temper and habit of mind as effectually determines a man to make the beſt uſe of his faculties; even that uſe of them which is moſt for the honour of the divine Being from whom he hath received them, for the

benefit of other reaſonable Beings, and the advancement of his own higheſt intereſt and happineſs. *This temper of mind is nothing elſe but the* affection of love *duly regulated and proportioned; regulated by the reaſon of things, and proportioned to the value and excellence of objects.*

The nature of man *being conſidered, together with* the relations *he ſtands in to* God, *and his* fellow creatures, love *is the* firſt duty *he owes both to them, and to himſelf; a love of* deſire, delight, *and* gratitude, *mingled with an* awful veneration *to his* Maker, *a love of* benevolence *to other* intelligent beings; *and a love enlightened by* wiſdom, *not flowing from* blind inſtinct, *to* himſelf. *To this love, and, by conſequence, to all the actions that are the neceſſary effects, and genuine expreſſions of it, there muſt be an* obligation antecedent in nature to any laws and precepts concerning it, whether humane or divine. *We are obliged to love God, not* merely *becauſe he hath* commanded *us to love him; but becauſe he hath made us* capable *of loving him, and both by his* perfections *and his* benefits *challenges our love. Did not theſe oblige us to love him as ſoon as we were in a condition to make any reflection on them, no* ſubſequent command *could oblige us to it. Why, elſe, are theſe things* (viz. *the perfections of the divine nature, and the kindneſs and love of God to us) mentioned as reaſons of love which no ingenuous mind can reſiſt? for if they are good reaſons why we ſhould love God, now that he commands it, they muſt be equally reaſons for love antecedent to the conſideration of any command whatſoever. And, perhaps, if we examine the matter a little narrowly, we ſhall find that the* very command to love God *ſuppoſes an* obligation *to love him* prior *to the command; this love, as* an affection of the mind, *having no other proper* cauſe *and* motive *than the* amiable qualities,

and

and beneficent actions *of the perſon beloved. We do not, we cannot, love any being with a love of eſteem, of gratitude, and complacency, only becauſe he* requires it, *but becauſe he would* deſerve it, *even tho' he did not require it. And therefore, I humbly conceive, the command to love God does not ſo* directly *reſpect the* affection of love it ſelf, *becauſe this is not* directly *and* immediately *in our power; but our* uſing thoſe means *that are proper to beget* the love of God *in our ſouls, among others, the contemplation of his* divine excellencies, *and the* relations *ſubſiſting between him and us, as he is our* creator, preſerver, *and* redeemer; *and alſo, that we* conſider and do thoſe things *which may be expected from all ſuch as have the love of God dwelling in them.*

It were eaſy, after the ſame manner, to prove that an obligation to a wiſe *and* rational *love of* our ſelves, *and to* the love of our neighbour as our ſelves, *immediately ariſeth from the* relations *between us and other men, and from our* character *as beings whoſe happineſs depends on their* own choice and behaviour. *And when I ſay that we are from the reaſon of things* under obligations *to this love of God, our neighbour, and our ſelves, and to the actions which as naturally flow from it (when they are in our power, and their connection with it is apprehended by the mind) as heat and light do from the fire; my meaning is, that the reaſon or nature of things* demands it from us, *that we ſhould be liable to* the reproaches of our own minds, *and* juſtly *draw on our ſelves* the cenſures of others, *and, above all the* diſpleaſure of the author of our beings, *if we indulged to a contrary temper and manner of acting.*

This obligation *may be ſtiled* an obligation of duty, *inaſmuch as love is* due *from men to men, and from men to God; and, becauſe due, is* therefore *enjoined under the ſanction of rewards and puniſhments.*

God

God himſelf would not require the love and obedience of his creatures if it was not a debt which they owed him before, and every debt *implies an* obligation to payment. *There is* another obligation *beſides this, and very carefully to be diſtinguiſhed from it, and that is an* obligation of intereſt. *It is manifeſtly our* intereſt *to obey God, becauſe he can, and will reward us if we obey him, and puniſh us if we do not; and this being our* intereſt, *is therefore our* prudence, *but not, for that reaſon* alone, *our* duty. *On the contrary, there muſt be* duty *(the duty of* love, *and of* unlimited obedience, *as the conſequence of love) antecedent to the* command, *and much more to the* penalty. *This is no more than ſaying that God, antecedent to his commanding any thing, hath a* right *to command it; for if there be an* antecedent right *on* his part, *there is an* antecedent obligation *on* ours; *and it is for this very reaſon that he lays his commands upon us, and to his commands adds threatnings, becauſe the* relation, *of* creator *and* creatures, *of* benefactor *and* beneficiaries, *that is between him and us, gives him a* right to command, *and obliges us to obey. Were there no obligation but that of* intereſt, *there could be* no duty, *properly ſo called; and where there was no* duty, *there could be no* puniſhment *juſtly deſerved, unleſs it be juſt to puniſh any one for not doing what he was not obliged to do, or what he would not have been obliged to do, even by the command it ſelf, had not the threatning been ſuperadded; in which caſe the threatning muſt be unjuſt, and ſo conſequently the puniſhment threatened.* This obligation of duty *may be* increaſed *by the conſideration of thoſe* rewards *and* puniſhments *which God hath annexed to his laws; not as theſe rewards and puniſhments* immediately *affect our intereſt and happineſs, but as the* promiſe *of the reward, and the delight which God takes in beſtowing it, are a manifeſtation of*

of the divine goodneſs ; and ſo likewiſe the threatning *of the puniſhment (the puniſhment being therefore* threatened *that it may not be* inflicted*) and* in that view *ſtrengthen our obligation to love and gratitude.*

This, I take it, is a plain and intelligible account of thoſe moral fitneſſes in things, *and* eſſential and everlaſting differences of actions, *which* ſome *have as warmly and unaccountably* denied, *as* others *have ſtrongly argued for them. All* rational beings *are* moral agents ; *ſuch an agent is* man, *capable of* diſcerning *a difference in actions, that ſome of them are ſuitable to his nature, and the circumſtances of his being, others not, and of* chuſing *and* determining *according to this difference. Now there being ſuch a difference between things and actions, as to their agreement or diſagreement with his rational nature (e. g. between gratitude to God, and ingratitude) there is a manifeſt fitneſs in ſome and unfitneſs in others, and theſe* fitneſſes *or* unfitneſſes, *as far as the former, are the object of a* complacential choice, *and the latter of a* deliberate diſlike, *and both theſe are* free, *may juſtly be called* moral, *becauſe they regard* moral agents, *and theſe, as conſidered in their* moral capacity ; *and theſe moral agents are properly* obliged *to govern themſelves by theſe fitneſſes, becauſe they will be* worthy of blame, *if they do not.*

It may not be unuſeful to unfold this matter a little more diſtinctly. Notwithſtanding then the ideas of natural *and* moral fitneſs, *and of* natural *and* moral good *are not* formally *the ſame, yet there is an inſeparable connection between them ; ſo that no diſpoſition or action can be fit or good in a* natural ſenſe, *but there muſt be a* moral fitneſs *attending it, and when cloathed with its proper circumſtances, it will be* morally good. *The actions of virtue and religion have a* natural fitneſs or goodneſs in them, as they are in their own nature adapted to anſwer ſeveral valuable

valuable ends and purpoſes. *e. g. the love of God, a conſtant regard to him in the whole of our behaviour, and ſolemn acts of worſhip, being agreeable to that ſtate of dependence which all* created *beings have on the* firſt *and* uncreated, *and expreſſive of their ſenſe of this their dependence, and of the* goodneſs of God *which hath communicated life with all the advantages of it to them, are therefore* naturally fit and good. *In the ſame ſenſe, juſtice and charity have an undiſputed fitneſs and goodneſs, becauſe it is by theſe that ſociable beings contribute to their mutual advantage and pleaſure, and without them had better live apart, than together. And who is there that reflects on the apparent tendency of temperance, and the right employment of our time and thoughts to preſerve the body in health and vigour, and to improve and enlarge the mind, but muſt be forced to acknowledge that there is a natural goodneſs and fitneſs in theſe things? This may ſerve to explain the natural fitneſs and goodneſs of virtue and religion. They are denominated* naturally *fit and good, not as if the* object *of them was* immediately *ſome* natural good, *or pleaſure, but from their natural fitneſs or goodneſs to anſwer ſome conſiderable end.*

From this natural fitneſs *that which is* moral *can no more be disjoined, than* eligibleneſs *can be from* happineſs, *or* lovelineſs *from* beauty *and* proportion. *For becauſe the actions and diſpoſitions beforementioned are fitted to anſwer all theſe good ends, therefore 'tis fit that beings, capable of it, ſhould* deliberately chuſe *to perform ſuch actions, not now and then, but conſtantly; and make it their endeavour to excel in ſuch diſpoſitions. This, I ſay, is* morally fit, that rational, free, and active beings, ſhould exerciſe their reaſon in convincing themſelves of the excellency and congruity of virtue and religion, their freedom in the choice of them, and all the powers

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of their nature in an agreeable courſe of action. *If there be a* right *and a* wrong *in the uſe of our faculties*, this uſe *of them is* right, *and* the contrary *would be* wrong; *and to a being that can diſtinguiſh between right and wrong, there is an* indiſpenſible moral fitneſs *in the former, and unfitneſs in the latter. In ſpite of their utmoſt endeavours to extinguiſh in themſelves the ſenſe of* good *and* evil, *men are invincibly conſcious that one way of uſing their faculties is good, another evil, that 'tis reaſonable and fit that they ſhould obſerve and follow this diſtinction, and that it will be impoſſible, blind as they are to their own failings, they ſhould ever forgive themſelves, if they do not. Theſe two things then are plainly diſtinguiſhable*, the natural fitneſs of an action to anſwer ſome valuable end, *and* the rational and delightful choice of it, *which is its* moral fitneſs; *diſtinguiſhable, I ſay, not ſeparable; ſince 'tis not a thing ſubject to the determination of any will whatſoever whether it ſhall be fit for a reaſonable being to act reaſonably? and whether he ſhall be obliged ſo to act? the thing is eſſentially, unchangeably, and everlaſtingly neceſſary.*

Nor does this notion of moral fitneſſes and obligations not depending upon will and pleaſure, but neceſſarily reſulting from the nature and reaſon of things, at all derogate from the honour *of the Deity. On the contrary, one of the cleareſt and moſt convincing arguments in behalf of theſe neceſſary fitneſſes and obligations is that which is drawn from the* moral perfections *of the divine nature, which can never be proved on any other principles. In a late controverſy between two eminent* divines *of the* eſtabliſhed church, *One of them puts this queſtion,* Whether if [illegible] had commanded men to be unjuſt and ungrateful, it would have been morally good to be unjuſt and ungrateful? *to which the other anſwers,*

that it is putting an abſurd, ſelf-contradictory ſuppoſition, for it is ſuppoſing a God that is not neceſſarily wiſe and good, a God and no God.[1] *But where, I pray, is the abſurdity of this queſtion, in caſe there be no* moral fitneſſes *with regard to* humane actions, *previous in* nature *to the will of God? if there be no ſuch fitneſſes with regard to* humane actions, *neither can there be with reſpect to the* divine, *till God hath* willed *them; and then his willing any thing, whatever it be, will make it morally fit. Was it* morally *fit that God ſhould* govern *his reaſonable creatures according to the* natures *he had given them, and reward or puniſh them according to their actions? Grant this, and it will unavoidably follow, that there was the ſame fitneſs that men ſhould* act *according to the nature they had received from God; ſince if there was no fitneſs that men ſhould* act *according to their nature and relations, but what was produced by the* will of God *that they ſhould ſo act, there was then no fitneſs, unleſs the plaineſt reaſonings of our minds may deceive us, and could be none, for God's* governing *men according to their nature and relations, but what depended on the ſame abſolute will. After the* exiſtence *of God, and the* perfection *of his nature is taken for granted; yet that* this, *or* that, *is a perfection, we muſt have ſome way of knowing before we can ſay that God is poſſeſt of it.*

[1] As abſurd as he accounts this ſuppoſition, a writer called *Zeglovius*, was not aſhamed formerly to tell the world, that God may pleaſe out of the abſolute ſovereignty of his will to command all that wickedneſs he hath forbidden, and to forbid all that holineſs he hath commanded. Now we may ſuppoſe he would not have talked thus, if he had not judged it to be a neceſſary conſequence of the principle, that things are *morally* good or evil *only* becauſe God hath commanded or forbidden them. Vid. *Free diſcourſe between two intimate friends in defence of the principles and practices of ſome moderate divines of the church of England.* Printed 1670.

it. We could have no ground to affirm, that God is true, juſt, *and* good, *but upon the ſuppoſition that* truth, *and* juſtice, *and* goodneſs *do neceſſarily imply perfection, or ſomething better than the contrary; and if, on this account, we attribute them to God as neceſſary perfections of his nature, we muſt, on the ſame accouut, eſteem man obliged to practiſe, and imitate God in them as the perfection of his; the imitation being poſſible, and a foundation laid for it in the frame of every reaſonable being.*

The notion of moral fitneſſes being thus ſtated and defended, let any impartial perſon judge whether a late writer (not quite ſo remarkable for his candor as his talents) hath given a fair repreſentation of it, when he charges thoſe on that ſide with going upon the independent bottom, and ſetting up a ſyſtem of morality without God at the head of it. *One would think by this, that the opinion of moral fitneſſes and obligations was the offspring of* atheiſm, *or very near akin to it, and that* Hobbs, *and others of that* fraternity *were the great patrons of it. Whereas, the truth of the caſe is, that none have oppoſed the moral differences of things and actions ſo much as the atheiſts have done, and they who have appeared for them have been the moſt ſtrenuous and ſucceſsful aſſertors of the principles of religion. This will need no proof as long as there are ſuch names as* Grotius, Cudworth, Clarke, Woolaſton, *&c. It is not ſuppoſed by theſe* independent ſchemiſts, *as he calls them, that there is any ſuch thing as obligation previous in* time *to the will of God, but only in* order of nature; *neither is it ſuppoſed that this obligation hath properly the nature of a* law *(to which word the idea affixed is that of* the will of a rightful ſuperior*) but as it receives the ſtamp or ſeal of a divine command: nor finally, do they ſuppoſe that the commands of God can extend to* no other *actions but ſuch as had an origi-*

nal and antecedent fitneſs in them. On the contrary, from the nature and dependence of man, and the authority, wiſdom, and goodneſs of God, they infer the obligation of man to obey God without reſerve. The obligation to obedience *neceſſarily reſults from the* nature *of things, while ſome of the particular* inſtances *and* trials *of this obedience may depend entirely on* the will of God.

There is one objection lies againſt this account of moral obligations, which I the rather take notice of becauſe in anſwering it I ſhall have an opportunity to ſhew the meanneſs and inconſiſtency of the contrary principles. Let us *(ſaith the ingenious author before quoted)* imagine fitneſſes to be the rule to go by, and no Deity at the head of them to bind and enforce them, it may be fit for a man to obſerve them as far as is conſiſtent or coincident with his temporal happineſs; and that will be no virtue or duty, but ſelf-intereſt only and love of the world. ---But if God commands us to poſtpone our preſent intereſt, honour, or pleaſure to publick conſiderations, it is then fitting and reaſonable becauſe God by engaging us to it becomes our ſecurity that we ſhall not finally, or in the laſt reſult be loſers by it; what would otherwiſe be folly now commences duty and virtue, and puts on obligation.

Here I muſt take leave to ask, who ſuppoſes that there are fitneſſes without a Deity at the head of them, to bind and enforce them? On the contrary, becauſe there are eternal and unchangeable fitneſſes in things, we therefore conclude it to be the pleaſure of the eternal and unchangeable Being, and that it ever will be ſo, that his reaſonable creatures ſhould do whatſoever is thus fit and becoming. And 'tis only from theſe unchangeable fitneſſes in things that we can be certain of the unchangeableneſs of God in his purpoſes, promiſes, *and* government of the world.

Again;

Again; *ſetting aſide* a future ſtate, *it may not be very eaſy to prove that a man is* obliged *to do any thing inconſiſtent with his own preſent happineſs in order to promote the happineſs of others; nay, I believe, were the matter to be decided by vote, it would be carried by a great majority that no man is obliged to this, and that the thing is not in it ſelf* morally fit. *Not to enter into a needleſs diſpute,* be it ſo, *all that follows from hence is, that the principles of humane actions are not all of the ſame* force *and* efficacy; *nor fitneſſes of the ſame* rank and order; *that ſelf-love, as* an inſtinct *will prevail againſt benevolence, and as a* duty *may be allowed to do it, ſhould they happen to interfere in the* laſt reſult. *This, I ſay, is what follows from hence; but by no means that there is no ſuch thing as a* benevolent temper, *natural or acquired, or that whoever refuſes to do kind and benevolent actions at the expence of his own being and happineſs, hath nothing of benevolence in him, and when he does that which is right in it ſelf is not moved to it by virtue and duty, but only by ſelf-love, and the love of the world. A benevolent diſpoſition, and a ſenſe of duty may be the principle of the ſervice he does his fellow-creatures, tho' this benevolent diſpoſition does not work ſo ſtrongly as ſelf-love, and muſt therefore, as often as there is a competition of intereſts, give place to it, and a man might not think it his* duty *to make a ſacrifice of his* all *for the ſake of others. Let ſelf-love compared with benevolence be in* weight *but as* eight *to* ſeven, *it is evident that the balance will break on the ſide of ſelf-love, and yet benevolence hath really the ſame* weight *then as at other times, tho' not the ſame* effect, *(as ſeven of any kind of weight hath againſt eight of the ſame weight) and accordingly, let ſelf-love be taken out of the oppoſite ſcale, or a ſmall part of ſelf-love weigh againſt the whole of benevolence (that is, a leſſer inconvenience*

of

of our own againſt ſome very great advantage of a neighbour, or of the publick) and there are thouſands in the world who would immediately diſcover by their actions that they were no ſtrangers to benevolence. And 'tis very remarkable that in thoſe inſtances in which from a ſuperiority of ſelf-love men prefer their own intereſt to that of others, they ſeldom, if ever, act with that full bent of nature, and that perfect eaſe and ſatisfaction of mind as when they can by one and the ſame action do themſelves a kindneſs, and another man too; or be ſerviceable to others, tho' they have no private advantage by it. Where is that perſon who in a ſhipwreck would not be better pleaſed to ſave the lives of others together with his own, than to be under a neceſſity, if he will ſave himſelf, of thruſting off another from a plank that would ſink with the weight of both? The pleaſure of the eſcape would by ſuch a circumſtance be exceedingly diminiſhed. If when the happineſs of this life is ſuppoſed to be our whole happineſs, *we muſt not be allowed in any of our beneficent actions to be influenced by a principle of virtue, but by ſelf-love only, becauſe we ſhould decline doing thoſe actions were they irreconcileable with that happineſs; for the very ſame reaſon, it would be purely ſelf-love, and not virtue or duty, to do the ſame actions only becauſe God is our ſecurity that we ſhall not* finally *in the laſt reſult be loſers by them. Why muſt it deſtroy the notion of virtue and duty, ſo far to regard our preſent happineſs as not to act in oppoſition to it, in caſe our* preſent *happineſs be our* all, *any more than having regard to a future happineſs does it? ſince* ſelf *alike preponderates on both ſuppoſitions.*

On the foot, *which this author makes the whole of obligation to reſt upon, it ſeems to me that there can be no ſuch thing as virtue; that even the exacteſt obedience to the divine command would not be ſo. For*

ſee

ſee how he farther explains himſelf! If God commands it *(that we ſacrifice our own temporal happineſs to the publick)* he binds us, he obliges us to it, by connecting our true and certain happineſs with it. When we ſubmit to temporal pains, ſelf-denials, reſtraints, loſſes, damages, for the publick good, this is properly virtue. And yet this is not virtue unleſs God commands it, becauſe that alone can make it in our circumſtances rational, fitting or ſafe to do it. *And again*, the obligation to obey God reſolves into the neceſſity we are under as rational and thinking beings, to purſue our own moſt true and laſting happineſs. *What can be plainer than that according to this repreſentation of the matter we do nothing for the ſake of our fellow-creatures, or becauſe God hath commanded it, but becauſe he will reward it. And if we eſteem the obligation to come* wholly *from hence, and ſhould never do good actions but on this account,* (viz. *from the proſpect of* future happineſs, *not from favours* already received, *&c.) where is the* duty, *where is the* love of God *and our neighbour? But now, when, (tho' the reward promiſed by God be an* additional motive *to action, and we ſhould not ſeek the publick good in inſtances that did not ſtand with our* intire intereſt) *we yet do good from a benevolent temper, and becauſe we are perſuaded it is our duty to do it, eſpecially as God hath commanded it, whom we obey from a ſenſe of its being fit and becoming, as well as for our intereſt, that we ſhould do ſo, here is* virtue, *and* love, *and* goodneſs, *but upon no other* hypotheſis *that I can ſee. To me it appears a very ſtrange way of thinking; we do good to others becauſe we are* enclined, *and believe that we* ought *to do it, and yet becauſe we ſhould not judge our ſelves obliged to it, if our temporal happineſs (ſuppoſed to be our* all) *were to be the price of it, and our diſintereſted inclinations would*

would in this caſe be over-ruled by a ſtronger regard to our ſelves, therefore *there is no virtue or benevolence in what we do. On the other hand, we do good, not becauſe we have* really *any inclination to it, and think it to be fit and becoming, on ſeveral conſiderations, particularly God's having commanded it, but* ſolely *on the account of the reward promiſed in another life;* therefore *this is not ſelf-intereſt, but duty, virtue, the love of God and of man. This ſort of reaſoning is, I own, paſt my comprehenſion.*

Upon the whole, this notion which reſolves all obligation into the promiſes *and* threatnings *annexed to the law of God, or, which is the ſame thing, into the* hopes *and* fears *of men's minds raiſed by them, tho' it preſuppoſes the will of God which hath enacted the law, and fixed the ſanction, yet, under pretence of doing more honour to God and his law, hath in reality no reſpect to them at all, but terminates wholly in* ſelf-intereſt; *whilſt the other notion which aſſerts obligations antecedent in nature to the will of God, carries in it a tacit acknowledgement of the neceſſary and immutable perfections of God, and of his unmerited favour which hath beſtowed* being *with all the privileges belonging to it: foraſmuch as among theſe antecedent obligations, the obligation to the love of God, and a chearful obedience to his will, is one of the principal. This being ſo, the only perſons that can have any* colour *for charging this opinion as wanting in a proper regard to God, are they who hold* all *that this opinion implies, and* abundantly more, *even an obligation ſo to love God for his own ſake, as for his ſake to conſent to be miſerable, an obligation to put off* ſelf *entirely, and renounce all views to any intereſt of our own.* Men in diſtreſs of conſcience *(ſaith one of this* ſuperangelical way*) as I find him cited, for I have not the book,* if they have comfort from Chriſt are contented, if they have ſalvation from hell

hell by Chriſt they are contented, but Chriſt himſelf *(that is, Chriſt without comfort and without ſalvation)* contents them not. *This, I confeſs is ſuch a flight in religion as leaves all other ſchemes, even that which unites the love of God with ſelf-love, far below it. But it hath one unhappineſs attending it, and that is, that it is* abſolutely impracticable. *'Tis a very juſt obſervation, that all which ſuch diſcourſes can do is either to make men hypocrites, by pretending to do what they cannot, or to make honeſt men, who cannot thus cheat and delude themſelves deſpair of their ſalvation, becauſe they cannot find themſelves contented without it. To which I ſhall only add, that when God and nature, reaſon and ſcripture have joined the love of God with the hope of a reward, it is but preſumption in any man to endeavour to put them aſunder.*

The other thing which I obſerved in the entrance of this preface was, that one great excellence and commendation of the religion of our bleſſed Saviour is this, that it hath given us a ſcheme of the pureſt, the moſt uſeful, and the moſt ſublime morality that ever was. *This will not be denied by any one that peruſes the* original records of chriſtianity, *I mean the* ſcriptures *of the* New Teſtament, *with an unprejudiced mind, and conſiders in what a native ſimplicity of language, and yet with what a commanding authority, the moſt exalted maxims and rules of life are there delivered. Is not our* reaſon *as much pleaſed and ſatisfied as our* corrupt inclinations *are offended, with that religion in which the nobleſt heights of divine and humane virtues, ſacrificing our lives for the truth, forgiving injuries, doing good for evil, the moſt raiſed devotion, the moſt ſpiritual worſhip, the moſt active gratitude, the moſt extenſive and diſintereſted benevolence, the greateſt purity, the moſt unaffected humility, and, in fine, the moſt generous*

contempt of all the perishing enjoyments of time and sense, are taught, *and not only taught but* prest *upon us by considerations drawn from the* imitation of the most perfect of all Beings, *from the* example *of the* incarnate word, *from the* love of God and of Jesus, *from the* glorious discoveries *that are made to us in the Gospel, and* the bright and lively hopes to *which it hath begotten us*; *that is by the most powerful and persuasive arguments that can possibly enter into the heart of man to conceive. Such a morality as this, so recommended and enforced, is certainly a very great honour to our religion. For the same* reason *that proves there must be* moral duties *which having their foundation in the* nature of things *are immediately obligatory upon all reasonable beings, makes it evident that* the will of God *cannot but always conspire with the reason of things*; *so that it is alike impossible that God should* not *command such things as are* morally fit *and becoming, and that he* should *command any thing that hath the least* moral unfitness *in it*; *that therefore the* doctrine of Christ *being qualified to stand this test, and never appearing so lovely and excellent as when it is tried by it, hath one very considerable mark of its being a* divine religion, *and leaves no room for reasonable doubt that it is so when the other arguments for its truth, from* miracles, prophecies, success, *&c. are added to this.*

The inference *from all which is that we are exceedingly endebted to the* author of our faith *as upon* other accounts *so particularly on* this, *that, in the present corrupt state of mankind, when* humane reason *was so* enfeebled *by lust and passion*, perverted and overruled *by established customs, and* bewildered *among the numberless and clashing opinions into which the world was divided, he hath set before us in the clearest and most engaging light the* whole duty *and* interest of man. *Should it therefore be granted that* christianity,

as

as to the main of its precepts, was as old as the creation, *yet foraſmuch as* truth *had ſlept or been impriſoned almoſt from the beginning of the world to the* coming of Chriſt *(I ſpeak of the greater part of mankind) and* error *had walked abroad in its name, and both challenged and received the honours due to it, what thanks does* he *deſerve at our hands who ſet the priſoner free, and drove the impoſtor and uſurper from many of its ſtrong holds? Let the excellent morals of the chriſtian religion have been as old as time it ſelf, yet 'tis certain that in ſeveral reſpects they were* new *to the world when our Saviour republiſhed them. And what then are we to think of men that can argue after this abſurd and perverſe manner; there can be no ſuch thing as a* revealed religion, *becauſe if that which pretends to be ſo contains nothing but what the light of nature dictates to all men, it is* needleſs, *and if it adds any thing beyond what that teaches, it is* falſe, *and ſo is in neither caſe to be admitted under the character of a divine and ſupernatural revelation? as if God might not ſee proper to inſtitute* poſitive duties *for the trial of the obedience and reſignation of his creatures, to fence the* moral law, *or to be in ſome other way ſubſervient to it, or even in compliance with the innocent prejudices of mankind who would be leſs pleaſed with a revelation that preſcribed none but natural duties; or might not have* good reaſons *for ſuch commands that did not always and on firſt ſight appear to us; or as if the circumſtances of man* fallen *and* innocent, enjoying *a* revelation *and* deſtitute *of it, being different, new duties would not ariſe out of theſe different circumſtances; and* finally *as if it was no kindneſs to have ſuch a plain and compleat ſummary of duties prepared to our hands as reaſon could not have diſcovered and put together without a great deal of difficulty, and perhaps never actually did, eſpecially in the advantageous man-*

ner in which the precepts of the Goſpel are conveyed to us, being attended with the promiſe of divine aſſiſtance, *and eſtabliſhed by the ſanction of an* everlaſting reward.

On the other hand, tho' I would not knowingly give any juſt *ground of offence, yet I cannot forbear, before I cloſe this preface, taking occaſion to lament the great prejudice which chriſtianity hath ſuffered thro' the indiſcreet zeal of ſome perſons who, I doubt not, are very ſincere in the profeſſion of it. For while they ſet revelation and reaſon at variance one with the other they undeſignedly gratify the infidels, to whom no conceſſion can be more acceptable than that chriſtianity hath little or no ſupport from reaſon, and declares open war againſt it; which, tho' it may be very true of ſome things to which men have given the name of chriſtian doctrines, is utterly falſe of chriſtianity it ſelf, which is no leſs the* wiſdom *than the* power of God to ſalvation to them that believe.

It were well if ſome perſons would allow themſelves to uſe their reaſon *ſo far as to examine the doctrines which they have been taught to believe by their* natural influence *upon the duties and virtues of the chriſtian life. This rule they can have the leſs to object againſt becauſe it agrees with* that *laid down by our* bleſſed Saviour *himſelf*, by their fruits ye ſhall know them; *for I imagine it will appear probable to thoſe who carefully read the context, that by* their fruits *(the fruits of the* falſe prophets*) we are, in part, if not chiefly, to underſtand the corrupt fruits of* their doctrines, *which might properly be called* their *fruits, both becauſe the doctrines, which had a natural tendency to produce theſe fruits, were taught by them, and their teaching ſuch doctrines proceeded from the depravity of their hearts. And if this were our* Saviour's *meaning, it is plainly implied, that no* true

true doctrine *can have a bad influence on the* practical part *of religion, any more than* a good tree can bring forth evil fruit. *Are there any doctrines, then, the obvious tendency of which, inſtead of inſpiring and cheriſhing the* love of God, *is to damp the flame of that divine affection, and to beget a* ſervile tormenting fear, *which that love was intended to caſt out, together with endleſs and unanſwerable doubts and jealouſies? to darken our* contemplations *of God? to check our devout* aſpirations *towards him? and to unfit us for thoſe exerciſes of praiſe and thankſgiving in which every pious chriſtian ſhould be perpetually employ'd? Doctrines which, when followed into their plain conſequences, harden the heart againſt the more generous and humane paſſions? confine, and debaſe it? countenance any wrong turn and diſpoſition of mind? and teach men to think ſlightly of the neceſſity of holineſs? in a word, which lead them aſtray from God while they think they are imitating him? Are there any ſuch doctrines as theſe? To ſay the leaſt, no good man ſhould be very haſty in giving them credit, or very fond of holding them faſt, how long ſoever they have had poſſeſſion of him. For truth is ever uniform and conſiſtent with it ſelf, truth in the* underſtanding *with truth in the* will, affections, *and* practice. *Chriſtianity is a ſyſtem compos'd of* two other ſyſtems, one *of things to be* believed *the* other *of things to be* done; *and between theſe two there is ſuch a perfect harmony, they are ſo admirably adjuſted one to the other, and receive ſo much light and ſupport one from the other, that as the* beauty *and* ſtrength *of the* whole *is hereby greatly increaſed, ſo to a ſerious and judicious mind it muſt appear to be* a frame

frame of religion put together by a divine hand.

If the Sermon *hath little in it to entertain the reader, yet 'tis hop'd that it may fare ſomewhat the better for the ſake of the excellent* Charge *it introduces, which gave very great pleaſure and ſatisfaction from the pulpit; and, there is reaſon to think, will not be leſs acceptable to all impartial perſons from the preſs.*

PHIL.

PHILIPP. i. 21.

For to me to live is Chriſt.----

AMONG all the firſt converſions to the *chriſtian faith*, which were very ſurprizing upon other accounts beſides the greatneſs of their numbers, there was not *one* (at leaſt, of thoſe that are come down to our knowledge) ſo remarkable as that of the *apoſtle Paul*; as there was no one perſon who, after his converſion, proved a more able and zealous advocate for the cauſe he had eſpouſed. If an exceſs in his regard to the *law of Moſes*, and a miſtaken notion of it as intended to continue for ever, had been the *only* hindrances to his becoming a diſciple of *Jeſus Chriſt*, we may juſtly ſuppoſe ſo great a maſter of reaſon as he was, and a man of equal integrity, could not long have ſtood out againſt the evidence which the *goſpel* came attended with. But we are to conſider, that he was a *Phariſee* as well as a *Jew*, bred up in a ſect of their religion that was ſtrict even to ſuperſtition, and *was more exceedingly zealous than many of his equals in his own nation of the traditions of his fathers* [1]; that is, of *rights*, and *ceremonies*, and *articles of faith* that were not to be found in the *law* and the *prophets*, but had been added to them, in the way of *ſupplement*, by the *wiſdom of men*. And this it was that prejudiced him ſo highly againſt the *chriſtian religion* on account of its ſimplicity, and made him

[1] *Gal.* i. 14.

a perſecutor of all that profeſs'd it. A man of his honeſt nature, and good underſtanding, could never elſe have fallen into a practice which the firſt principles of *humanity* condemn. And, perhaps, it will be found, upon enquiry, that there never was ſuch a thing as perſecution *merely* for truth's ſake. *Pure religion, and undefiled before God* tends to inſpire a meek, a gentle, and charitable ſpirit; and, I believe, never fails of being accompanied with it, if not counteracted in its influence. But when the opinions and commandments of men are taught for the doctrines and inſtitutions of God; theſe, having no foundation in *reaſon* or *ſcripture*, muſt be ſupported by *humane authority*, and this authority defended by outward force and compulſion, becauſe not capable of any better proof.

Such a one was *Paul* in his *unbelief*. And what then ſhall we ſay, when, on a ſudden, we find him ſo entirely chang'd from what he was before? *A preacher of the faith which he once deſtroyed, and ready, for the Name of Chriſt, not only to be bound, but to die* [1]? even for that name, which, as much as he once hated it, he now reverenc'd and lov'd next to the name of *God* himſelf? No two perſons could well differ more widely from one another than *Saul* the *Phariſee* did from *Paul the Apoſtle of Jeſus Chriſt*. And, from what could ſuch an alteration in his *behaviour* proceed but from a real and deep *conviction* of his *mind?* Or to what muſt we aſcribe this conviction but to thoſe extraordinary cauſes of it mentioned in the *ſacred hiſtory?* viz. a *light*, and *voice* from heaven, when he was on his way to *Damaſcus*; attended, we may ſuppoſe, with *a revelation of Chriſt within him* [2]? From this firſt, and from the *demonſtration of the ſpirit*,

[1] *Gal.* i. 23. *Acts* xxi. 13. [2] *Acts* ix. 3, 4.

after-

afterwards, in his miraculous powers, of which he both largely partook himſelf, and was made a ſteward, or diſpenſer, to others? to which may be added the apparent excellency of the chriſtian doctrine, which, as ſoon as his prejudices gave him leave to attend to it, *entered into his heart, and was pleaſant to his ſoul.*

In this ſingle conqueſt we behold *the arm of the Lord* moſt ſignally *reveal'd*, and cannot forbear crying out, *ſurely the religion of Jeſus is divine! Our faith* receives an additional confirmation from that of St. *Paul*, and *our zeal* is enkindled by *his.* When we find this *great* and *good* man valuing himſelf upon being an *apoſtle*, a *ſervant* [1], a *priſoner* of *Jeſus Chriſt* [2]; determin'd to know nothing among the *Corinthians* but *Chriſt* and *him crucified* [3]; and, in this *firſt chap.* of his *epiſtle* to the *Philippians*, *rejoicing that Chriſt was preached* [4], tho' by thoſe who were no friends of his; nay, expreſſing his deſire that Chriſt *might be magnified in his body, whether it was by life, or by death* [5], and then, as the reaſon of this, declaring (what all his actions made good) that *to him to live was Chriſt, and to die was gain:* when, I ſay, we conſider all this, who, that hath the leaſt ſpark of devotion for his Redeemer, does not perceive it awaken'd and encreas'd by this illuſtrious example, and reſolve that to him likewiſe *to live ſhall be Chriſt*, in the fulleſt meaning of thoſe words that he can poſſibly come up to?

My deſign, in the following diſcourſe, is briefly to ſet before you this moſt amiable *character* in ſeveral *views.*

Firſt, As exemplified moſt eminently, and to the greateſt degree of perfection, in the *apoſtles of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.*

[1] *Rom.* i. 1. 1 *Cor.* i. 1. [2] *Eph.* iv. 1. [3] 1 *Cor.* ii. 2. [4] *Ver.* 18. [5] *Ver.* 20.

Secondly, As belonging, in a lower degree, to the *faithful miniſters of Chriſt* in every age of the church, and worthy of their utmoſt ambition and care to excel in it.

Thirdly, As that by which all the *genuine profeſſors of the goſpel* are known, and diſtinguiſhed.

The *general character* of all theſe ever hath been and ever will be, *one and the ſame*. Good men have always agreed in their regard to Chriſt as their *Saviour*, their *Pattern*, and their *Lord*; and as well they who never ſaw Chriſt *in the fleſh*, as thoſe who converſed perſonally with him, have loved him more than the deareſt comforts and enjoyments [1] of life; more than life it ſelf. Nor could it be otherwiſe; ſince *Chriſt* being *the life* of holy ſouls [2], the ſpring and *fountain* of their *ſpiritual life*, by means of which he *liveth* in them, and the *author* of an *eternal life* in the heavens, all ſuch cannot but *live unto the Lord* [3]. Which, by the way, I take to be an expreſſion exactly parallel to that in the *text*; for, whether it be ſaid that *we live unto Chriſt*, or that *to us to live is Chriſt*, the meaning ſeems to be this, that *the love of Chriſt* in our ſouls is our governing *principle*, the *authority of Chriſt* in the goſpel our conſtant *rule*, and the *honour and intereſt of Chriſt* in the world our chief *aim*; that by theſe we give laws to our inclinations, purify and exalt our paſſions, frame our deſigns, and conduct the whole courſe of our actions; all which concur, as ſo many lines, in this center; that our thoughts and purſuits are connected, controuled, or quickened, by this *one view*; I mean, in ſome good meaſure, and according to the proportion of our love to the Redeemer.

[1] *Matt.* x. 37, 38, 39. [2] *Col.* iii. 4. [3] *Rom.* xiv. 8.

This,

This, which hath been the common and ruling character of ſuch as have *loved the Lord Jeſus in ſincerity* [1], from the firſt foundation of the chriſtian church to this day, makes an *eſſential difference* between them and all others, who, whatever good words and fair ſpeeches they may make uſe of to deceive the ſimple, and themſelves too the ſimpleſt of all, have no right to ſay, that to them *to live is Chriſt*, ſince, in reality, they *live only to themſelves*, *walk after their own luſts*, and lead a ſenſual and worldly life, ſuitably to that worldly and ſenſual ſpirit which reigns in them.

But then beſides *this difference* between *true* chriſtians and *falſe*, which conſtitutes characters *eſſentially oppoſite*, there is a *diverſity* in the *ſame* character, ariſing from the different *functions*, *offices*, and *ſtations* of life, in which the followers of Chriſt are called to ſerve him. The *unity* of their character conſiſts in their unfeigned affection to their common Lord, approved by their ſincere obedience to all his laws and commandments; the *variety* of it in the ſeveral ways of expreſſing their affection, according to their ſeveral capacities of ſervice, their place and order in the church, and the ſpecial duties belonging thereto. Let us now therefore proceed to conſider this moſt excellent character in its *principal views*. And,

Firſt, Let us conſider it as exemplified moſt eminently, and to the greateſt degree of perfection, in the *apoſtles of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*. I ſay, in the *apoſtles*, and not in St. *Paul only*, becauſe in this and other places, where he ſpeaks directly in his own perſon, we ought to underſtand him as tacitly including the reſt of the *apoſtles*, unleſs the thing ſpoken was manifeſtly peculiar to

[1] *Epheſ.* vi. 24.

this *apoſtle*, or the circumſtances of the place reſtrain it to him; eſpecially, when he ſometimes expreſly joins them with himſelf, as particularly, in the 1 *Cor.* iv. 9.---13. *God hath ſet forth us the apoſtles laſt, as it were appointed unto death; for we are made a ſpectacle to the world, both to angels and men*, &c.

If we enquire what was the *office* of the *apoſtles*, we ſhall find that they were choſen to plant the religion of Chriſt in the world, and to be his witneſſes among all nations[1]. In diſcharging which high truſt they were *indefatigable*, and *faithful to the death*; and that which made them ſo was nothing elſe but *their great affection to their Lord and Maſter*.

1. *They were indefatigable in the duties of their function, and faithful to the death.* Their zeal in the cauſe of their *crucified maſter* was without example. One thing did they deſire, and labour after, and that was to draw diſciples unto Chriſt, and if they did not *draw all men to him*, it was no fault of theirs, who were the beſt ſervants of the beſt maſter that ever was. *All things were by them counted but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt*[2], the *ſavour* of which they endeavoured to ſpread in every place; travelling, as 'tis probable, while they were on land, from place to place on foot[3] like their *maſter* before them, *who went about doing good*[4]; and, as it were, forgetting their own country, and their father's houſe, that they might carry the light of the goſpel into diſtant regions of the earth. It might be truly ſaid of them, as of the *Phariſees* (but in a more honourable ſenſe) that they *compaſt ſea and land to make proſelytes*; not, as the *Phariſees* did, to ſome favourite and

[1] *Matt.* xxviii. 19. *Acts* i. 8. [2] *Phil.* iii. 8. [3] *Acts* xx. 13. [4] *Acts* x. 38.

corrupt

corrupt opinions of their own, but to a *doctrine* that was *according to godlineſs*. Great was their *patience* in ſuſtaining ſo many toils and difficulties; great their *courage* which encountered with the moſt univerſal and violent oppoſition, and overcame it. One would have thought, they had not the ſame appetites, and paſſions, and weakneſſes as other men, by the little regard which they ſhewed them. For Chriſt's ſake they *took pleaſure in diſtreſſes* [1]; *rejoiced that they were counted worthy to ſuffer ſhame for his name* [2]; endured *hunger, and thirſt, and nakedneſs, were buffeted, had no certain dwelling place, being reviled they bleſt, being perſecuted they meekly ſuffered it, were made the filth of the world, and the off-ſcouring of all things* [3]. Yet did *none of theſe things move* [4] them, *neither counted they their lives dear to them, that they might finiſh their courſe with joy, and the miniſtry which they had received of the Lord Jeſus, to teſtify the goſpel of the grace of God.* In the midſt of dangers, they went on in the ſteady proſecution of their deſign, and did not *fail*, nor were *diſcouraged, till they had ſet judgment in the earth*, and *the iſles* that were afar off had received the chriſtian law. They were the perſons by whoſe miniſtry the world of mankind was prepared, and preſented as a kind of offering to God; and when this was done, they thought their blood could not ſerve to a more honourable uſe than, like the wine or oil upon the ancient ſacrifices, to be poured out as a *libation*, to render it more ſolemn and compleat. To this ſenſe is that of the *apoſtle Paul*, Phil. ii. 17. *If I be offered upon the ſacrifice and ſervice of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.* In a word, they, who while their maſter was with them, were at

[1] 2 *Cor.* xii. 10. [2] *Acts* v. 41. [3] 1 *Cor.* iv. 11, 12, 13. [4] *Acts* xx. 24.

ſtrife

ſtrife which of them ſhould be *accounted the greateſt* [1], after their maſter was taken from them ſeemed to contend for nothing ſo much as who ſhould deny himſelf moſt for his ſake, and be moſt conformable to him in his ſufferings and death.

2. *Their affection to their maſter, and nothing elſe, was that which made them willing to paſs thro' ſo many difficulties in propagating his religion.* Their's were *the labours of love, which they ſhewed to his name.* We cannot reaſonably aſcribe their conduct to any other cauſe. Their *ſeeming* zeal for *Chriſt*, could not proceed from a *real* concern for *themſelves*, and the advancement of their own *by-ends*, all which they evidently renounced. So far were they from ſeeking *their own glory*, that they ſtudiouſly declined any part of the honour that might redound to them from the wonderful works they performed: a remarkable inſtance of which we have in the cure of the *lame man* who ſat *at the gate of the temple* [2] aſking alms of them that entered in; for when, being healed of this malady, beyond his expectation, *he held* Peter *and* John, *and all the people ran together unto them greatly wondring, Peter* addreſſing himſelf unto them, ſaith, *Ye men of* Iſrael, *why marvel ye at this? Or why look ye ſo earneſtly upon us, as tho' by our own holineſs or power we had made this man to walk? The God of our fathers hath glorified his ſon Jeſus, and his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man ſtrong whom ye ſee and know; yea, the faith, which is by him, hath given him this perfect ſoundneſs in the preſence of you all.* They did not diſcover the leaſt inclination to ſet up *ſeparate parties and factions*, who ſhould be called after their names,

[1] *Luke* xxii. 24. [2] *Acts* iii. 1. &c.

and

and by whom they might be admired and applauded. When ſomething of this humour began to ſhew it ſelf in the church of *Corinth*, (one ſaying he was of *Paul*, another of *Apollos*, another of *Cephas*, and another of *Chriſt* [1]) it was immediately diſcountenanced by the *apoſtle Paul*, who aſks them, not without ſome warmth, *is Chriſt divided? was* Paul *crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of* Paul? *who is* Paul, *and who is* Apollos *but miniſters by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man* [2]? As worldly wealth and power, the eaſe and pleaſure and pomp of life, were not *actually* the rewards of their labours, ſo they could never be ſo very ſimple as to think that they *would be*. They could not hope to conquer the world by a ſhew of contemning it, and, after that was done, to ſit down and enjoy the fruits of their conqueſt in a dominion eſtabliſhed upon the credulity of mankind, and in a life of ſenſual pleaſure and indulgence. Such imaginations as theſe were too romantick to enter into the heads of any men but of *common ſenſe*; and he muſt be a perfect ſtranger to the preaching and writings of the *Apoſtles* who will not allow them to have had *that*.

Should any charge them with a *love of ſingularity*, I would for once borrow what a *late advocate* [3] *for infidelity* hath offered to clear the *Deiſts* of the preſent age from a like imputation. "Would any "man *(ſaith he)* affect ſingularity in religion when "it muſt expoſe him to the hatred of the prieſt-"hood, the bigots, and the immoral?------and "when by this means one is looked on as a mon-

[1] 1 *Corinth.* i. 12, 13. [2] *Chap.* iii. 5. [3] Author of an addreſs to the inhabitants of *London* and *Weſtminſter*, in relation to the biſhop of *London*'s paſtoral letter.

"ſter

" ſter by ninety nine in a hundred, and others " ſcarce dare give him any countenance? what " hath this unhappy man but conſcience to ſup- " port him? ---- how can men quit thoſe opinions " which they owe to the ſtrong prejudice of edu- " cation, and the ſtronger of intereſt, for new " opinions, without comparing the reaſonableneſs " and fitneſs of one with the flaws and weakneſs " of the other?" *So far he.* Let any impartial perſon apply this reaſoning to the caſe of the *Apoſtles*, and their exchanging the hope of a *temporal deliverer* (with which the whole nation of the *Jews* was obſtinately prepoſſeſt) for faith in a *crucified Jeſus*; and it will appear to be as juſt and ſtrong, as it is weak and fallacious when uſed in defence of *our modern unbelievers*.

If it be ſaid, that the *Apoſtles* were influenced by a proſpect of *fame after death*, and of the power which their *ſucceſſors* might ſome time or other get into poſſeſſion of; that tho' they began with precepts of the greateſt humanity and tenderneſs, and doing the utmoſt good to mankind, tho' of ever ſo different perſuaſions, as it is neceſſary for them to do who deſign a new religion, in oppoſition to religions already eſtabliſhed; yet when people ſhould be drawn in by theſe plauſible pretences of humility and charity and diſregard to preſent things, and by the appearances of theſe virtues in the *firſt preachers* of chriſtianity, they that *followed* might venture to throw off the maſque, and boldly to avow that ſpiritual tyranny and domination which the *Apoſtles* diſclaimed: if, I ſay, any ſuch thing as this ſhould be inſinuated, (as in fact it hath been [1]) the anſwer is eaſy, that we cannot, without the greateſt abſurdity, ſuppoſe that *one*

[1] Chriſtianity as old as the creation, and the characteriſticks.

generation

generation of *proud*, *ambitious*, *ſelfiſh*, *deſigning*, and *worldly* men ſhould be willing to live poor and deſpiſed, and bear all manner of indignities and reproaches, without betraying the leaſt deſire of revenge, only that a *few men* of the ſame *ſpirit* and *temper* in *following generations* (but not of the ſame *kindred*, or even the ſame *nation*) might have an opportunity to gratify all their worſt paſſions to the height. Men do not uſe to labour, *merely* that others (no more related to them than the moſt diſtant part of mankind) may enter into their labours. If they are deſirous of wealth and power, they are deſirous of them for themſelves, or for thoſe of their own family, and country; not for ſtrangers, and that a very ſmall part of the world may be able to lord it over the reſt. And, as for *fame*, it would be a ſilly thing for any one to ſacrifice his reputation while *living* to the hope of an uncertain and uſeleſs reputation *after death*; which the *apoſtles* too, if they were ſuch kind of men as this objection repreſents them (*viz.* liars, and impoſtors) had no manner of reaſon to expect. "Can (they ſaith the *writer*[1] I before-"mentioned, when he is pleading the cauſe "of the *Deiſts*, can they) if they have any "concern for reputation after death, expect fair "uſage then, when they are ſure to be belied "while alive?" If we ſhould aſk ſuch queſtions as theſe concerning the *apoſtles*, the argument would not be merely *ad hominem* (as it is uſually called; that is, an argument not to be anſwered by him againſt whom it is made uſe of, becauſe he cannot do it without contradicting his own principles and manner of reaſoning) but would *in it ſelf* be ſolid and and concluſive; for the *apoſtles*

[1] Author of the addreſs, &c.

of our Lord were, 'tis well known, *hated of all men for his ſake* [1], as their *maſter* had foretold them they would be (eſpecially by ſuch ſort of perſons as this writer inſtances in) and their followers *a ſect every where ſpoken againſt* [2].

It could not therefore be *their own name*, nor any *empire and intereſt of their own*, but the *kingdom of Chriſt* that the *apoſtles* laboured ſo unweariedly to promote, that he might reign in every *nation*, and in every *heart*. It was not *ſelf-love* that was the ſpring of their activity, but the *love of Jeſus*, from which extraordinary affection for their Lord and maſter we may (conſidering what it coſt them) infer, with ſome degree of aſſurance, that they ſtedfaſtly believed in him, and endeavoured to perſuade the world of the truth of no other things than they were very well ſatisfied of themſelves. For, if they had not believed that their maſter was the *promiſed Meſſiah*, and his life and doctrine ſuch as they repreſented it; had they not believed that he wrought undoubted miracles during his life, roſe again from the dead, and aſcended up into heaven; in a word, that he *came from God, and went to God*, inſtead of having any reaſon to follow him in his life-time, and much more to be fond of his memory, and attached to his cauſe after his crucifixion, ſo far as for his ſake to part with all thoſe things which are eſteemed moſt valuable by the generality of mankind; inſtead of this, they would have had the greateſt cauſe to deteſt him as an *impoſtor*, by whom they had been miſerably befooled, and involved in difficulties and dangers, out of which they could have no way of eſcape but by forſaking the ſide they had choſen; and very juſtly would *Chriſt crucified* have been

[1] *Matt.* x. 22. [2] *Acts* xxviii. 22.

more

more *a ſtumbling block* to them than to the other *Jews*, and greater *fooliſhneſs* than he was to the *Greeks* themſelves. The *apoſtles* therefore did *really believe* the truth of thoſe things which they publiſhed concerning the *doctrine* of Chriſt, his *life*, and *death*, and *reſurrection*, *the miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt* as the effect and proof of his *aſcenſion to the right hand of God*, and the *revelations* they delivered as from him; and if they *believed* the truth of theſe things, they *knew* them to be true, becauſe theſe were not things which they received *barely* upon the *report of others*, but which they atteſted as *matters of fact* well known to *themſelves*, and muſt, conſequently, know to be *falſe*, if they were not certain of their *truth*.

The reſult is, that ſince it cannot be queſtioned that the apoſtles had no other motive in being ſo *zealouſly affected* in the cauſe of chriſtianity, as they appeared to be, but their *love* to the *bleſſed Jeſus*, and *faith* in him; beſides the benefit of their *example*, both to miniſters and people, their conduct affords us an *argument*, next to demonſtrative, *of the truth of our religion*. Their whole *hiſtory* proclaims that they were not *deceivers*, (foraſmuch as ſuch perſons have always ſome by-ends of their own to ſerve, which the *apoſtles* had not) and *the nature and circumſtances of the caſe* prove that they could not be *deceived*; and, if they were not deceived themſelves, and did not knowingly deceive others, *we* are not deceived, when *we believe on Chriſt through their word*.

Having thus taken a view of the character in the text as exemplified moſt eminently, and to the greateſt degree of perfection, in the *apoſtles of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*; let us now paſs on.

Secondly, To conſider the ſame excellent character as verified in the *faithful miniſters of Chriſt*, in every age of the church; and as worthy of their higheſt ambition, and their utmoſt care, to excel in it. There is no one who *ſerves God with his ſpirit in the goſpel of his ſon* but may ſay for himſelf, in that *capacity* and *relation*, *to me to live is Chriſt*. But then, we are to obſerve, that tho' all have *purchaſed to themſelves a good degree*, in this reſpect, yet not the *very ſame* degree, (of which this ſingle conſideration is proof ſufficient, that the *love of Chriſt*, where it is equally *ſincere*, is not equally *ſtrong*) nor have any acquitted themſelves ſo well, but they may be ſuppoſed capable of doing better. And, for this reaſon, I ſhall in my enlargement on this character take the liberty to mention ſome things which do not ſo properly belong to the *eſſence* of it, as to its *perfection*, and rather expreſs what is to be *deſired*, and what the miniſters of *Chriſt* ſhould *labour after*, than what many of them have *actually attained to*. The main things which enter into this extenſive character may be comprized under theſe *three heads*, viz. that every faithful miniſter makes it the principal ſcope and buſineſs of his life to promote the honour and intereſt of his Redeemer, more particularly in the ſalvation of thoſe ſouls that are committed to his charge; that in preaching the goſpel, and in all the other parts of his miniſterial conduct and labours, he follows that method which he apprehends to be beſt adapted to the attainment of this glorious end: and, *finally*, that he eſteems the approbation of his Lord, by whom he was bought, and is employed, an ample recompence for all the diſcouragements and ſelf-denial he can undergo in his ſervice.

1. *A faithful miniſter of Chriſt will make it the principal ſcope and buſineſs of his life to promote the honour and intereſt of his Redeemer, more particularly, in the ſalvation of thoſe ſouls that are committed to his charge.* I believe, I need not add, that when we ſpeak of the *honour of Chriſt* as the *end* of our miniſterial labours, we are to underſtand it in connexion with the *glory of God*, to which *that* of Chriſt *as Mediator* hath its ultimate reference. *If every knee muſt bow to the name of Jeſus, and every tongue confeſs that he is Lord*, it is to be done *to the glory of God the Father* [1], to whom *glory is aſcribed to be in the church by Chriſt Jeſus, throughout all ages, world without end* [2]. We do not here conſider the *Word*, abſtractly, *that was in the beginning with God, and was God* [3]; but we conſider *Chriſt* as the *Word made fleſh* [4], for the redemption of the world, as the *anointed of God*, the *one mediator between God and man* [5], the *one Lord*, and *head*, and *ſaviour of his body the church* [6], under which characters they for whom he mediates, the ſubjects of his kingdom, his redeemed ones, owe, and ſhould delightfully pay him all the returns of praiſe and gratitude and love, the homage of their hearts, and the obedience of their lives. We *the miniſters of Chriſt* are under ſpecial obligations to ſeek his honour and intereſt, in regard we are the *meſſengers of Chriſt*, his *ſervants* in a *peculiar*, and *appropriate* ſenſe. And what is our *meſſage* but *to beſeech ſinners in Chriſt's ſtead, to be reconciled unto God* [7]? What is our *office* and employment but, like the *angels*, though in a different way from them, to *miniſter to thoſe who ſhall be heirs of ſalvation* [8]; and to do, in ſome

[1] *Phil.* ii. 10, 11. [2] *Eph.* iii. 21. [3] *John* i. 1, 2. [4] *Ver.* 14. [5] 1 *Tim.* ii. 5. [6] *Eph.* iv. 5. *Col.* i. 18. *Eph.* v. 23. [7] 2 *Cor.* v. 20. [8] *Heb.* i. 14.

ſenſe,

ſenſe, what the *fore-runner* of the *Meſſiah* did, *make ready a people, prepared for the Lord* [1] ? to promote the religion of the *bleſſed Jeſus* both in the knowledge and practice of it, which is no other than the *kingdom of God among men* ? to explain the *method of reconciliation*, and the bleſſings and terms of the *goſpel covenant* ? to perſuade thoſe who make a profeſſion of chriſtianity to live agreeably to their profeſſion, that they may be the *diſciples of Chriſt indeed* ? to be guides to others in the paths of *truth*, and *peace*, and *holineſs*, and to aſſiſt them in acquiring all thoſe divine virtues and qualifications which are neceſſary to prepare them for a part in the heavenly felicity ? This is what we are to endeavour with the greateſt fervency and application of mind. Not to teach men how to *diſpute* and *wrangle*, but to *live well* ; not to bring them over to any particular perſuaſion, and to contend blindly and fiercely for that, as if they muſt then be good chriſtians of courſe, but to gain them to Chriſt, and to the love of univerſal goodneſs. We muſt not *preach ourſelves, but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord* [2]. We muſt not ſuffer our humours and paſſions, our pride, and envy, and covetouſneſs to mingle with and corrupt the *ſingleneſs* of our intention for the honour of the Redeemer, which ought to ſwallow up all theſe. We ſhould abhor all private, or party views ; be alike indifferent to *our own ſecular intereſt*, and to the intereſt of any *ſect* or *denomination of chriſtians* whatſoever, any farther than as by upholding and promoting *that* we conſult the intereſt of *Chriſt*, and of true ſubſtantial religion. For, in reality, all other things, compared with this, are, whatever ſome may think, too inconſiderable to be worth minding, and much more to be worth our ſtriving a-

[1] *Luke* i. 17. [2] *Cor.* iv. 5.

bout

bout them. We are not to flatter the vices, or comply with the follies and humours of our people in things prejudicial to religion, any more than to ſtudy how to gratify our own. We are, indeed, to pleaſe *all men for their good, to edification* [1]; but *no man* for fear of his diſpleaſure, and to ſerve any little purpoſes of our own; for, if we thus *pleaſe men*, how are we *the ſervants of Chriſt* [2]? In a word, if we ſeek glory, it muſt be that which flows from our being *workers together* [3] with the Son of God in the recovery of a loſt world. And, in truth, here alone, and in other inſtances of doing good, ambition is a virtue; here alone is it capable of meeting with ſatisfaction. 'Tis a glorious thing to be employed by *divine providence* in reſcuing the lives and liberties of our fellow creatures when in danger; to have *the bleſſing of thoſe that were ready to periſh come upon us*, to ſave men from bitter want, and lawleſs oppreſſion. 'Tis ſtill more glorious to be an inſtrument of *divine grace* in delivering ſouls from bondage and death, and conducting them, in the way of righteouſneſs, to honour and immortality. Herein, we at once act for ourſelves, for the nobleſt intereſts of mankind, for the honour of the Redeemer, and for the glory of God: for *the cauſe of holineſs* is the cauſe of *all theſe*. In particular, we cannot *ſerve Chriſt* more acceptably than by being ſerviceable to the *ſouls of men*, to *inſtruct*, to *reſtore*, to *confirm*, to *edify*, and to *comfort* them. He himſelf hath made this the teſt of our love to him; *Simon ſon of Jonas, loveſt thou me? Peter* anſwering, *Lord, thou knoweſt all things, thou knoweſt that I love thee* [4], he ſaith unto him, *feed my ſheep*. He himſelf is the great lover of ſouls; for theſe *he laid down his*

[1] *Rom.* xv. 2. 1 *Cor.* x. 33. [2] *Gal.* i. 10. [3] 2 *Cor.* vi. 1.
[4] *John* xxi. 17.

life;

life [1] ; theſe are the *flock and church of God* which *he purchaſed with his own blood* [2], entruſting the care and overſight of them to us. When theſe are ſaved he *ſeeth of the travel of his ſoul and is ſatisfied* [3] ; and demonſtrates the *power of his grace* in their *converſion* and *final perſeverance*, as in *making his ſoul an offering for their ſins*, he ſhewed the unparalleled *greatneſs of his love*.

2. *In preaching the goſpel, and in all the other parts of his miniſterial conduct and labours, a faithful ſervant of Chriſt will think himſelf bound to follow that method which he apprehends to be beſt adapted to anſwer the glorious end now mentioned.* And what is *this method?* Give me leave to be your *remembrancer* in a *few things*.

We are at proper times, and as our ſubject occaſionally leads us, *to ſet the evidences of the chriſtian religion* before our hearers, in the beſt and plaineſt manner we are able ; that their faith may not be the mere reſult of education, but a reaſonable and intelligent act, which, I will venture to ſay, is the faith which, being attended with a ſuitable life, does moſt honour to Chriſt in the view of the world, and is moſt becoming reaſonable creatures, as men are.

We ſhould take all oportunities of ſhewing them *the excellency of the doctrines and precepts of our holy religion*, (which by the way, makes a part of the *proof of its truth*) and obſerving to them how admirably they all conſpire in one *great end*, viz. the *glory of God*, and the *perfection*, and *happineſs of man*. It ſhould be our endeavour to convince them of the *reaſonableneſs* of thoſe duties that are required of them, and the *goodneſs of God* in requiring them ; leading them to take notice how

[1] *John* x. 11. [2] *Acts* xx. 28. [3] *Iſa.* liii. 11.

all

all thoſe rules of behaviour which *reaſon hath*, or with due care *might* have, found out, are deliver'd with much *greater advantage* in the *ſacred writings*; and that whatever duties and appointments are *peculiar* to the *chriſtian inſtitution*, they are not therefore *arbitrary and unreaſonable injunctions*, but either *naturally* ariſe out of thoſe *circumſtances* which we are in as fallen creatures reſtored by the mediation of Chriſt to an *aſſurance* of the *full* favour of God, and *everlaſting* bleſſedneſs (ſuch as *faith* and *truſt* in the *mediator*, and *love* to him) or are excellently fitted, as *means*, to facilitate the practice of *moral* and *chriſtian* virtues, and our continual progreſs and improvement in them, of which kind the *Lord*'s-*day* and the *Lord*'s-*ſupper* are eminent inſtances. It is thus we are moſt likely to bring men to that obedience of the goſpel which will be uniform and conſtant, delightful to themſelves, acceptable to God, and for the credit of their religion, and its divine author. It became Chriſt as a *lawgiver* to *teach with authority*, letting men know what God required of them, and what they, according to their behaviour might expect from God, without entering into the particular reaſons of his commands, and proving the divine original of his doctrine from a diſtinct conſideration of its nature and tendency, tho' he himſelf hints at this. And much the ſame method is taken in thoſe ſacred writings by which the chriſtian revelation is conveyed down to us. The doctrine they contain is perfectly *reaſonable*, but there is very little *reaſoning* upon it. This part is left to thoſe who are only the *expounders* of the *ſcripture-revelation*, and who owe it to the *author of their faith*, to the *faith it ſelf*, and to *them that believe*, to trace and mark out thoſe footſteps of the *divine*

holineſs, *wiſdom*, and *goodneſs* that are ſo conſpicuous in the frame of our religion.

We ſhould be very careful alſo to preach nothing but the *pure uncorrupted doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt*; not mixing what is *humane*, and ſometimes worſe, with what is *divine*. No good man will *knowingly* do this; but he may do it thro' *inadvertency*, and *prepoſſeſſion*. He may have his favourite opinions which he never thoroughly tried by the ſtandard of *ſcripture*; he may have taken things too much upon truſt, and ſubſtituted the *interpretations of ſcripture* by fallible men in the room of the *ſcripture doctrines* themſelves. Hath he *ſearched the ſcriptures diligently*, and that he might have *the mind of Chriſt* in them? hath he laid aſide all prejudice, as far as the weakneſs of humane nature in this ſtate of imperfection will admit of it? hath he proceeded with the ſame care, and in the ſame method, in order to come at the right meaning of the *inſpired ſcriptures*, that are uſed in ſettling the ſenſe of other authors, eſpecially thoſe that are *ancient*, *viz.* conſidering the occaſion, ſcope, and connexion of the diſcourſe, comparing one part with another, making plainer and more numerous paſſages the rule by which to underſtand thoſe that are more obſcure, and fewer, and finally, judging of the exact import of expreſſions and phraſes by the *cuſtoms* that obtained *when* and *where* the books were written, and the *idioms* or manners of ſpeaking which *the writers* followed; and not according to the weight and value which they would bear in our times and language; which *one rule* is of ſuch importance that, if it had been always obſerved, I much doubt ſome opinions had never been heard of which make a conſiderable figure in many *modern ſyſtems of divinity?* If he hath neglected this, he hath not diſcharged his *whole duty* in this particular.

particular. Not that we are, without any reaſon for it, to ſuſpect the truth of thoſe things which we have been taught; and much leſs to think the worſe of them becauſe they are commonly taught and believed. But if on the one hand we ought not to *ſuſpect* received opinions, *without reaſon*, no more ought we, on the other, to *perſiſt in the belief* of them, *without it*; when we have the *Bible* in our hands, and, after we have taken the beſt care we can to underſtand that ſacred book, ſhall be better able to judge, (for our ſelves, I mean) which among the ſeveral contending parties of chriſtians come neareſt to their common rule; or at leaſt ſhall be juſtified to our own minds, and to the truth, if it ſhould prove that we have judged wrong: *always remembering*, that a *pure* and *humble mind*, equally remote from every extream, is the beſt prepared for *finding* out the truth, and for *teaching* it when found; and that together with theſe commendable diſpoſitions of mind we ought to join our earneſt prayers to the *Father of lights* for his heavenly illumination; which, perhaps, *we* have ſomewhat more reaſon to expect than other men, as well as to be more ſollicitouſly concerned about it; becauſe not only our own perſonal conduct, but that of others may in ſome meaſure depend upon the notions we entertain. If a *private chriſtian* be in an error, it is not of ſo much conſequence, as long as it hath no ill effect upon his life, and ſo goes no farther than a miſtake in his own thoughts. While a *miniſter*, whoſe integrity we will ſuppoſe ſecures him from the pernicious influence of an erroneous opinion, may, by propagating that opinion, *undeſignedly* lead others into ſome wrong practice, or confirm them in it, who have not the ſame honeſt diſpoſition that he himſelf hath. That we may be the more cautious how we advance any doctrines,

without examining whether they are a part of the true *original ſcheme* of chriſtianity, let us conſider, that while we tie our ſelves down to any *humane creeds*, and *confeſſions*, and *catechiſms*, 'tis very poſſible that ſome part of what we are building upon the common *foundation* may be only *hay and ſtubble* [1], not, what we take it for, *gold and ſilver*; and that in this caſe tho' *we our ſelves* may be *ſaved*, having *meant well*, yet *our works ſhall be burnt up*; and we go without that *praiſe from God* which we ſhould have had, if we had ſought his will more at his own mouth, whether we *had*, or *had not*, always taken it right. The cloſer we keep to the purity and ſimplicity of the goſpel, ſo much the more good is the goſpel, in our hands, likely to do; as that food and medicine is moſt wholeſome which hath nothing foreign and improper mixed with it. And I leave it to be conſidered, whether one way of preſerving the ſimplicity of *ſcripture-doctrines* may not be, either not to depart from the *language* in which the *Holy Ghoſt* hath ſeen fit to deliver them, or, when we do, to expreſs our ſelves in the moſt *intelligible* words, and neareſt reſembling the ſimplicity of the ſcriptures; ſtudiouſly avoiding the obſcure *terms*, and perplexed and ſubtil *diſtinctions*, and endleſs *queſtions* of the *ſchools*, which are of no profit, but to the ſubverting of thoſe that deal in them.

Again, if we would be like St. *Paul*, we muſt not *ſhun to declare the whole counſel of God*; for ſo he ſaith of himſelf, that he did not, in his moſt inſtructive and moving diſcourſe to the *elders of Epheſus*. And what this means is beſt explained by another expreſſion in the ſame diſcourſe, that he had not *kept back any thing that was profitable*

[1] 1 *Cor.* iii. 12, &c.

for

for them, teſtifying to the Jews, *and alſo to the* Greeks *repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jeſus Chriſt* [1]. Let this be our rule. Let us always conſider, what is *profitable* for our hearers; of which kind we may be ſure every thing is that is a part of *repentance towards God*, and of that *faith in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt* without which no man can be ſaved. Nothing of this nature ſhould be withheld upon any account whatſoever. Nothing that is neceſſary to *faith*, and *holineſs* ſhould be left unexplained and unenforced; for this would be one way *of handling the word of God deceitfully* [2], ſuppreſſing that part of it which would be unacceptable, and *ſpeaking only ſmooth things* [3]; at moſt, contenting our ſelves with general invectives againſt ſin, and exhortations and perſuaſives to a holy life, without doing any thing to diſturb that falſe peace in which ſo many ſouls lull themſelves aſleep to their own undoing; by which means, inſtead of *commending our ſelves to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God* [4], we ſhould only get in favour with their luſts. This maiming the word of God is next akin to adulterating it, and of almoſt as fatal conſequence to the ſouls of men. As for *doubtful opinions*, they ſhould be always given for what they are, and ſeldom have any place in our diſcourſes. And where things are of *leſs importance*, how well perſuaded ſoever we may be in our own minds of their truth, they ſhould not have more ſtreſs laid upon them than they will warrant, nor be *violently* and *unſeaſonably* urged upon thoſe who are in contrary opinions; but *inſinuated* by little and little as they can bear, it being a maxim of *chriſtian* as well as worldly *prudence* that *the end is always to*

[1] *Acts* xx. 20, 21. [2] 2 *Cor.* iv. 2. [3] *Iſa.* xxx. 10.
[4] 2 *Cor.* iv. 2.

regulate

regulate the means, and conſequently, the end of our preaching being *the profit of many that they may be ſaved* [1], we ought to avoid whatever would deprive us of this moſt deſireable fruit of all our labours.

In the *manner* of preaching that way is undoubtedly to be preferred which is beſt ſuited to *enlighten the underſtanding*, and to *affect, and reform the heart*, ſuch a *plainneſs of ſpeech*, ſuch an *eaſy, and apparent method* in dividing a diſcourſe, ſuch a *familiar way of reaſoning*, as will ſhew that we do not neglect the *meaneſt* of our hearers; and withal, ſuch a *decency, propriety*, and *juſtneſs* as cannot be condemned by the moſt *judicious*.

And now, I would aſk, what farther is neceſſary to the *preaching of Chriſt?* for my part, I freely own that I can underſtand nothing elſe by preaching of Chriſt than preaching the *religion of Chriſt*, as it hath been now explained. If we conſider Chriſt as the *author* of our religion, we cannot any other way give men ſo high a notion of *him* as by teaching them to conceive moſt honourably of *that*; which, I hope, is not done by telling them that the doctrines and precepts of the goſpel are irreconcileable to reaſon, and overthrow all our natural notions of things; but, on the contrary, by proving that no man who makes *a right uſe* of his *reaſon* can refuſe his aſſent to the *chriſtian revelation*, or find fault with it; its *precepts* having ſo manifeſt a tendency to ſecure the happineſs of mankind, and its *doctrines* to give weight and efficacy to its precepts; and neither of them being unworthy to come from the fountain of all truth and perfection. And what then ſhould ſet ſome men ſo much againſt *the uſe of reaſon in*

[1] 1 *Cor.* x. 33.

religion,

religion, and be the ground not only of their *ſeeming contempt*, but *real hatred and dread* of it? Beſides a conſciouſneſs that their notions will not bear this trial (I do not mean only of reaſon *ſeparate from ſcripture*, but of *ſcripture it ſelf* interpreted by thoſe *rules* which common reaſon directs to) other cauſes might be given of this; among which we may reckon theſe two following, *viz.* that the fanciful and myſtical way of preaching, in which *any doctrine* may be fetched out of *any text*, is at the ſame time the eaſieſt for the preacher and moſt acceptable to the generality of hearers; and that *the work of converſion*, as they explain it, is of ſuch a nature, that reaſon and conſideration have little or no real influence upon it; tho', by the way, the excellency of the chriſtian religion does not conſiſt only in the excellency of its *end*, the *glory of God in the reſtoration of man to his image and favour*, but likewiſe of the *means* employed for the accompliſhment of this end; as the excellency of theſe means muſt appear in their proper ſubſerviency to the end deſigned by them, and not barely in their being the *condition* without which God will not work grace in the ſoul. It is very true, *the excellency of the power* is more *viſibly* of God when the means contribute *nothing* to the effect; as in the inſtance of the *blind man*, in curing whom our bleſſed Saviour did nothing but *anoint his eyes with clay* [1], after he had ſpit upon it. But as we cannot therefore ſay that clay and ſpittle are an excellent remedy for blindneſs, ſo neither would it be proper to ſay of the faith of the goſpel that it is an admirable means of purifying the heart, and making men *partakers of a divine nature*, if an *immediate* and *irreſiſtible* operation of the *Holy Spirit*

[1] *John* ix. 6.

did

did *all*, and *faith*, as a *moral cauſe* or *motive*, did *nothing*. And, if it be granted, that there is a real ſanctifying virtue in the goſpel, under the influences of the Holy Spirit, this virtue muſt proceed from a fitneſs in the doctrines and precepts of the goſpel to beget in us the love of God, and of thoſe qualities and actions that will render us like God: which love muſt be the effect of a conviction that the things which the goſpel aſcribes to God as adorable perfections, and requires of man in order to his reſembling God, are in their own nature lovely and excellent. Even the *promiſes* and *threatnings* of the goſpel do not, perhaps, ſo *directly* influence the converſion of the heart to God, and our endeavours after holineſs; but rather *indirectly*, as they work upon our paſſions, and thereby engage us to conſider more ſeriouſly and attentively than we ſhould otherwiſe do, the reaſonableneſs of religion, the intrinſick value and native beauty of holineſs, and great excellence of all thoſe divine and ſpiritual attainments which chriſtianity obliges us to aſpire after.

And ſince Chriſt is the *glorious ſubject* of the *goſpel revelation* as well as the divine author of it, he that goes over all the parts of this revelation, and thoſe oftenеſt which are moſt eſſential, and uſeful, cannot avoid frequently ſpeaking of *Jeſus Chriſt*, his *perſon* and *offices*, his *life* and *death*, his *humiliation* and *exaltation*, together with his moſt *aſtoniſhing affection* to the children of men manifeſted in all theſe; and, if he loves his ſubject, he will diſcourſe of theſe things with pleaſure, take every opportunity of returning to them, fix his admiring thoughts upon them, and recommend them to the meditations of others, preſs the duties of the *chriſtian life* from *theſe motives*, and not fail to take notice of the *end* of all that Chriſt *did* and

ſuffer'd

ſuffer'd and *taught* upon *earth*, and is now doing in *heaven*, *namely* to turn men from ſin to holineſs, and, by faith and holineſs, unto God. If there be any who are not contented with all this, but will needs have more, tho' not contain'd in ſcripture, at leaſt according to our notion of things, and even inconſiſtent with the doctrine taught there, we muſt beg their excuſe, if we do not leave our own way for theirs, till we ſee better reaſon for it. We readily agree with them, that he is the *beſt preacher of Chriſt* whoſe way of preaching is beſt fitted to convince men of their *need of Chriſt*, and to bring them to *truſt* in him, and depend upon him for *grace* and *glory*, and to *eſteem* and *love* him. But then no ſerious chriſtian will think that man to have a *regular truſt* in Chriſt, who truſts him for what he never promiſed, and even againſt the conſtant tenor of his promiſes and declarations; or that he hath a *true eſteem and love* of Chriſt, who, while he talks in a high ſtrain of the lovelineſs of his *perſon*, neglects to imitate the virtues of his *divine life*, and, inſtead of *keeping his commandments* [1], which is the rule that Chriſt himſelf hath given us to judge of our love by, is in raptures to think that Chriſt hath left *nothing* for *ſome men* to do but confidently to believe that he hath done *all* for them. Unhappy ſouls, who have *ſo learned Chriſt!* ſo as St. *Paul* tells the *Epheſians* they had *not learned him, if they had been taught by him as the truth is in Jeſus* [2]. The *Epheſians* had not learned Chriſt, ſo as to be guilty of the immoralities [3] which the *apoſtle* had before mentioned; which they will do well to conſider, who fancy themſelves to have learned Chriſt *better* than other people, and to have a better notion of *juſtifying faith*, becauſe they have a more contemptible one of *good works*.

[1] *John* xiv. 21. [2] *Epheſ.* iv. 20, 21. [3] *Ver.* 17, 18, 19.

In the other parts of his miniſterial office and conduct, the perſon I am now deſcribing will take care that all things in the worſhip of God *be done decently and in order* [1]. In *prayer* and the *adminiſtration of the ſacraments*, he will be deſirous of performing his part ſo as to ſecure the reverence due to the inſtitutions and offices of religion, and to excite and keep up a ſpirit of piety, and a *ſober rational* devotion. He will alſo frame his behaviour at other times and places, as well as *in the houſe of God*, after ſuch a manner, that the prejudices too commonly taken up againſt religion may be removed, and he may gain a place in the affections of thoſe that know him both for *himſelf* and *that*. He will conſider that as it is his duty earneſtly to exhort men to a holy and heavenly life, to a contempt of the world, and the greateſt ſincerity and ſimplicity in all their actions, and to uſe all the arts of perſuaſion for the effecting this end, ſo he cannot be diſpenſed with from being *an example to the flock* of theſe and all other chriſtian virtues, without which, nothing that he can ſay will be much regarded. He will, in a particular manner, reflect on the anſwer of our bleſſed Saviour to that queſtion, *who is the greateſt in the kingdom of heaven* [2] *?* not the moſt wealthy, or powerful, or learned, not thoſe who can eaſieſt carry any point by their arts of managing the people, but the moſt humble: *whoſoever ſhall humble himſelf as this little child, the ſame is greateſt in the kingdom of heaven.* He will not *ſtrive*, but *be gentle to all men, apter to teach* [3] and reaſon, than, where argument fails, to ſupply the place of it with uncharitable cenſures, *in meekneſs inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves, if God peradventure will give them repentance, to*

[1] 1 *Cor.* xiv. 40. [2] *Matt.* xviii. 1, 4. [3] 2 *Tim.* ii. 24, 25.

the

the acknowledging of the truth. Obſerve, it is ſaid, *if God will give them repentance*, that is, if the methods which God hath appointed will work repentance, not if they may be made to repent of their errors by being made to ſuffer for them. After all, *charity is the greateſt friend of truth, and truth of charity.* Truth is ſooneſt found by the charitable, were it only for this reaſon that they have a greater openneſs of mind than other men; and the charitable have uſually moſt ſucceſs in defending the cauſe of truth.

3. *A faithful miniſter will eſteem the approbation of his Lord, that bought him, and by whom he is employed, an ample recompence for all the diſcouragements and ſelf-denial he can undergo in his ſervice. Great things* he muſt neither *ſeek*, nor expect, (in this world, I mean, where indeed the greateſt things are but little to a great mind, and in compariſon of the infinitely greater things above) difficulties and oppoſition he may and muſt expect *without ſeeking.* The ſtated and ordinary duties of his function, to be rightly performed, will coſt him much care and watchfulneſs and pains, tho' his love to Chriſt, and to the ſouls of men will make his work much eaſier than it would otherwiſe be; and, perhaps, after all his prayers and labours, he may have little ſucceſs. The weakneſſes and miſtakes of good men themſelves may occaſion him ſome trouble, and the obſtinacy and blindneſs of others who hate to be reformed a great deal more. He may loſe the friendſhip of ſome by thoſe very things which ought to fix him the deeper in their eſteem; they may become *his enemies becauſe he tells them the truth* [1]. He may be evil ſpoken of, and faults found with his *preaching*, his *temper*, his

[1] *Gal.* iv. 16.

converſation. When this is the caſe, he ſhould be ſo much his *own friend* as to examine whether he hath given any ground for theſe cenſures, and to deal ſincerely with himſelf, not juſtifying or ſparing any faults becauſe they are his own. But if, allowance being made for the common failings of humanity, he ſtands acquitted to his own mind, he need not doubt of his being accepted of Chriſt, *who judgeth not as man judgeth.* It is enough that his Saviour hath promiſed that he *will be* with his faithful ſervants in the miniſtry *to the end of the world* [1]; it is enough that he will *ſtand by them and ſtrengthen them* [2], and in the laſt general aſſembly will pronounce that welcome ſentence, *well done thou good and faithful ſervant, thou haſt been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord* [3].

Thirdly, Let us now, in the *laſt place*, conſider this character as that by which all the genuine profeſſors of the goſpel are at preſent diſtinguiſhed, and will hereafter be known, from all others. The time will allow me to do little more than juſt give you a few *hints* on this ſubject.

1. *They reckon themſelves obliged to devote all their talents, their wealth, power, intereſt, to the advancement of Chriſt's kingdom in the world.* Chriſt to them is *all*; and therefore *their all* is laid at the feet of Chriſt. Whatever influence they have in their own families, in the civil ſociety, or in the church of God, they are pleaſed with it chiefly on this account that it gives them an opportunity of ſupporting and countenancing true religion and virtue; as well knowing that what they do for theſe is ſo much done for their Redeemer, that he puts it

[1] *Matt.* xxviii. 20. [2] 2 *Tim.* iv. 17. [3] *Matt.* xxv. 21.

on his account, and will *repay it*, *altho' he might ſay unto them*, *that they owe him their own ſelves.* O how were it to be wiſhed that all the profeſſors of the goſpel were of this ſpirit; and that true chriſtians did not ſometimes forget themſelves, and their Saviour, and ſuffer their zeal to be too much damped by the world, and the bad examples they meet with in it! St. *Paul* complains of a coldneſs that had ſeized ſome chriſtians among whom he converſed, who *ſought their own things and not the things of Jeſus Chriſt* [1]. I fear, the ſame witneſs would be as true of a great many now as it was then. May I not ſay, of *many more*, and in a *much greater degree?*

We have had *enquiry* upon *enquiry* concerning *the decay of the diſſenting intereſt*, and the *cauſes* of it. Not to aſk in what reſpects this intereſt is leſs flouriſhing than it *hath been*, which is the thing meant by the *decay* of it; no one will deny that it is not ſo flouriſhing, on more accounts than one, as it *might be*. And where ſhall we lay the fault of this? On miniſters only? and from whom are we to expect the remedy? wholly from them too? The *former* would not be doing them *juſtice*; and the *latter* would be doing them *too much honour*. God grant that wherein ſoever miniſters have been defective in their duty, or done any thing to the diſſervice of religion (as particularly in contributing to deſtroy, or not contributing as they ought to have done to preſerve and cultivate, that *unity and affection* on which both the credit and the ſtrength of any religious intereſt do ſo much depend) they may ſeriouſly think of it, mend what hath been amiſs, and be wiſer for the time to come. But after miniſters have taken their ſhare of the

[1] *Phil.* ii. 21.

blame,

blame, there will, I doubt, be more than enough left for the people too. Let thoſe that are concerned lay their hands on their hearts, and ſay, whether they have not grown cold and indifferent to *nonconformity*, and in ſome company been aſhamed to be known for *diſſenters*, only becauſe the *favours* and *preferments* of the world, and *publick faſhion* are not on this ſide; and whether they do not think that others have forſaken us quite, for no other reaſon than this? The duty of ſuch perſons is to mortify their love of the world, and to make it a rule to themſelves (according to the laudable reſolution of a very worthy man) *never to do that for preferment, or any temporal conſideration, which they would ſcruple doing without.* Let them conſider, whether they have been ſo tender as they ſhould of the reputation of ſuch miniſters as have not had the happineſs to pleaſe thoſe *whoſe perſons they have in admiration?* whether they have not been too eaſy to receive impreſſions, and take up reports to their diſadvantage, and, inſtead of promoting their uſefulneſs, hindered it? Let them confeſs, whether in the ſeveral ſteps of life, and in the deſigns they form and purſue they are not *more* animated than they ſhould be by private and preſent views, and *abundantly leſs* than they ought by a publick ſpirit, and the generous and divine temper of chriſtianity? particularly, in their own alliances, or in the diſpoſal of children in *trades* and *profeſſions*, or in *marriage*, which is the firſt thing in queſtion, the chief determining point? Is it *religion*, or the *world?* Do not too many, after they have inſtructed their children in their education to be careful of their ſouls in the firſt place, as good as tell them by having ſo little regard to this point themſelves, that they ſhould take no notice of what they have been taught?

taught? Do they not ſeem to think that no expences turn to leſs account than thoſe which are laid out upon the occaſions of charity and piety? *I ſpeak not of all*; for, bleſſed be God, we have *ſome*, I truſt, *many*, eminent examples of another kind, by whom the credit of religion is in ſome meaſure redeemed, and its intereſt heartily eſpouſed. Theſe declare by their actions that nothing is ſo dear to them as the *name and honour of Chriſt*, and that where theſe are concerned they are determined to make every thing elſe ſtoop, that is of *private conſideration*.

2. *The genuine profeſſors of chriſtianity prove their claim to this character by placing moſt of their eſteem and affection where they think they diſcern moſt of Chriſt*. By this meaſure they regulate their judgment both of *perſons* and *parties*. They love their Redeemer in *his Image*, and whereſoever they find *that*, they can reſpect and own it, tho' in thoſe of very different perſuaſions from themſelves. In imitation of their great pattern, they embrace all mankind with *a love of benevolence*, or good will, and all that love Chriſt with a love of *complacency* and eſteem, taking pleaſure in their gifts and graces, and, with thankfulneſs to God, acknowledging the benefit of their examples. Among the different forms and denominations which unhappily divide the chriſtian world, they take their lot with that which in their judgment comes neareſt the *ſcripture model*, not entering however (unleſs it be without knowing it, and when they are impoſed upon by miſrepreſentations of perſons and things) into a *party ſpirit*, and into meaſures that are detrimental to the common intereſt of true chriſtianity. While they join in communion with this or that *particular church*, they do not forget that they are members of the *church catholick*, and indiſpenſably

ſably bound to ſeek the general credit and proſperity of *that*. I hope it will not be imputed to any *ſide views* when I add,

3. *True chriſtians will be taught by their regard to Chriſt what ſort of reſpect and treatment they owe to his miniſters.* That as on the one hand they are not to build their faith on the *authority of men*, whatever opinion they may have of their knowledge and integrity, ſo on the other they are *to eſteem* all faithful miniſters *very highly in love for their work's ſake* [1], and for *his* ſake whoſe ſervants they are. Thoſe that are *paſtors according to God's own heart* will be afraid of claiming a power over the underſtandings and conſciences of men which *they* cannot *exerciſe* without invading the rights of the *author of our faith*, the *one maſter* [2] and *lawgiver*; nor *others ſubmit* to without betraying the rights and liberties of the *chriſtian church*. People are to judge for themſelves; we always ſuppoſe this in appealing to the ſcripture for the truth of all that we deliver as belonging to *faith* or *practice*; for to what purpoſe is this appeal made if people are not permitted *to ſearch the ſcriptures*, to ſee whether things are ſo as they are repreſented? But then as long as a miniſter keeps within his proper bounds, and appears to *watch for ſouls* as one that knows *he muſt give account* [3], he may reaſonably expect not only the good wiſhes, but the encouragement and aſſiſtance of all that are well affected to the cauſe of their common Lord. They ought in no caſe to weaken his hands, and, by expreſſing a contempt for his perſon and miniſtrations, to leſſen his capacity of doing good. Miniſters being men of *like paſſions* and infirmities with others, the people ſhould not raiſe their demands too high; eſpecially, when

[1] 1 *Theſ.* v. 13. [2] *Matt.* xxiii. 8. [3] *Heb.* xiii. 17.

they

they themſelves ſo often need pardon for the defects they are guilty of in the duties of their ſeveral ſtations. Let them think of that of our Saviour, *with what meaſure ye mete it ſhall be meted to you again* [1]. Are the ſentiments of your miniſter in ſome things different from yours? yet certainly, that which recommends him to the approbation of his *Lord and maſter* ought not to deprive him of the eſteem and affection of his *hearers*. Now, among other things, the diligence and care of a miniſter to know *the mind of Chriſt*, and to preach nothing elſe but that, muſt make him ſtand higher in his favour; and therefore tho' the effect of this his pious endeavour ſhould be his not agreeing in every point with *eſtabliſhed ſyſtems*, this, inſtead of giving his people, or any others, a worſe notion of him ſhould diſpoſe them to weigh impartially what he hath to offer in his own defence, and, (as it may prove) in the defence of the truth too; or to bear with him, if after all they cannot be of his mind, as long as he ſhews himſelf one of a modeſt and peaceable ſpirit, and to act from conſcience, and not from a levity of mind, or an affectation of ſingularity.

And now, *what remains but that we all of us reſolve that by divine aſſiſtance we will make this character our own, and, by ſtriving after an eminence in it, put it out of diſpute that it is ſo? that to us to live ſhall be Chriſt?* not barely to *talk*, but to *live?* that we will live to his *honour*, and be ready to die for his *truth?* And let us remember, that no one can pretend to this who leads an *unholy life*; which is at once an open contradiction to the *precepts* of Chriſt, to the *example* of his life, and the *deſign* of his death. A holy life is the greateſt commendation to our religion, and an unholy one (to thoſe who judge of a religion by the converſation and manners of its pro-

[1] *Matt.* vii, 2.

 feſſors)

feſſors) the greateſt reproach and diſgrace. Let us, *my brethren*, whether miniſters or people, *conſider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works* [1]. Let us, as to the *ſpirit* of piety, (whatever we may think of ſome of the *particular inſtances* in which it expreſt it ſelf) form our ſelves upon the example of the *primitive chriſtians*, of thoſe who were the *firſt preachers*, and the *firſt profeſſors* of the goſpel; and when we think of their zeal in the cauſe of chriſtianity which even *conſumed them* be aſhamed to reflect on our own coldneſs and indifference. Let us farther conſider that we are *not our own but bought with a price* [2], and that it is but reaſonable, and what gratitude will oblige us to, to live to him who died for us. And, finally, that if to us *to live be Chriſt*, then, and then only, *to die will be gain*; that we ſhall then be able with more confidence to commend our departing ſpirits into his hands, after we have proved the ſincerity of our love to him in the whole courſe of our actions, and ſhall not be *aſhamed before him at his coming* [3], as he will not be aſhamed of us.

O moſt merciful Saviour! dwell in our hearts by faith, fill us with *thy ſpirit*, inſpire us with *thy love*. The *Seraphim*, thy heavenly miniſters, are a *flame of fire*; ſo are all thoſe pure and bleſſed ſpirits that dwell near the throne: ſo, fain would we be too, amidſt all our darkneſs and imperfections; ſo would we burn with love to our divine maſter, ſo ſhine with his likeneſs, and ſerve him with the ſame faithfulneſs and delight! then we know, we ſhall *never fall*, never be diſappointed of our hopes, but *an entrance ſhall be miniſtred to us abundantly into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*.

[1] *Heb.* x. 24. [2] 1 *Cor.* vi. 19. [3] *John* ii. 28.

THE

THE

CHARGE, &c.

I Am to cloſe this ſervice with an exhortation to you, *my brethren*, ſuitable to that office, into which you have been now *regularly* introduced. We are all witneſſes this day of your *ſolemn vows*, and ſhall rejoice to be ſo of your *diligence*, *faithfulneſs*, *and ſucceſs* in performing them; and of our maſter's approbation at the laſt day.

'Tis too late to make an *apology* for my ſelf, in undertaking this province, when I am entering upon it: though without your candor I ſhall certainly need *one* in the cloſe. Give me leave to ſay, I don't ſtand here your *dictator* and *inſtructor*; but with the concern and exhortation of a friend, in ſome meaſure to lay before you the nature of that *ſolemn charge and duty* you have undertaken: in doing which I would not be thought to ſay more to you than my ſelf. I would conſider your *office* and duty in three ſeveral views, and from thence take occaſion of exhorting you to obtain thoſe PASTORAL VIRTUES, which, in my opinion, will add both to its *honour and uſefulneſs*.

I. The work you have taken upon you, *my brethren*, is really a DIFFICULT one. You are now obliged to think and ſtudy for others, as well as your ſelves: to be able to ſatisfy their *doubts*, alleviate their *Sorrows*, rectify their *wrong opinion* of

things, and aſſiſt them in the attainment of *virtue* and *happineſs*. You will be obliged to obſerve men's *tempers* and *paſſions*; the ſeveral *hindrances* and *temptations* incident to humane nature, in order to furniſh your ſelves with every advantage of addreſs. This will call you to a variety of cares, and require a degree of knowledge, beyond what we might reaſonably expect to find in other men.

Beſides, you will have *adverſaries* to deal with, ſuch as will increaſe the *difficulty* of your ſervice. Our unhappineſs is we ſeldom know how to differ from one another, without being *uncharitable*; without conſidering and treating each other as *enemies* [1]. Enemies therefore you muſt expect to riſe up againſt you. *Some* that will reproach you for your *work*'s ſake, *others* your *party*. *Some* that will queſtion your *aptneſs* to teach, *others* your *authority*. In ſhort, as many *adverſaries*, as there are *unbelievers* in the world, *ignorant zealots*, and *ſlaviſh admirers* of HUMANE TRADITIONS.

But I am apt to think, you will eſteem it the greateſt difficulty of all, to exerciſe *unſucceſsful mi-*

[1] 'Tis impoſſible we ſhould all have exactly the ſame apprehenſions of things. We ſhall ſee them differently according to the different ſituation in which *chance*, or *cuſtom*, or *education*, or *reading* hath placed us. But we know not how to make allowances for theſe things. Nay we are ready to think more *favourably* of a *vicious perſon*, who uſes the ſame CREED and CHURCH with our ſelves, than of a *good man*, who is not in the ſame way of thinking. The cauſe may be this. Every man is conſcious to himſelf of *error in practice*, and therefore from a principle of *ſelf-love* is led to make that allowance to others, which he ſees himſelf to want. On the other hand few or none are thus conſcious of *error in judgment*, and becauſe they ſee no ſuch flaw in themſelves here, they find no motive in themſelves to charity. This is the beſt apology I can make for this unreaſonable temper in mankind; and it ſhews how little we are acquainted with the narrowneſs and imperfection of humane underſtanding.

niſtries;

niſtries; to find after your moſt ſollicitous thoughts and honeſt intentions to do good, you can do but little. You fear piety and virtue are wearing off to *indifferency* and *form*; that hard hearts remain without feeling, dead ſouls without life, and you know not how to reach the caſe. No, though you come prepared with cogent reaſonings, perſuaſive oratory and divine encouragements, yet all to little purpoſe. Sin and the world prevail againſt you with more effectual inſinuations. This undoubtedly will be the great difficulty. This the great diſcouragement to conclude every publick ſervice, with a *who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed* [1].

I don't mention theſe things with the leaſt intention of diſcouraging you; not doubting but that you have already *counted the coſt* [2]. But that I might deal faithfully with you, I would take occaſion from hence to exhort you,

1. To enter this ſervice with reſolution and courage. This is the way not to flinch at difficulties when they come; nor deſert a good cauſe when it is in danger. The fear of man will certainly bring a ſnare [3], and the love of eaſe and ſafety tempt us to mean compliances, if we be not well fortified. Be reſolved, *my brethren*, to diſcharge your duty, let men be diſpleaſed with you for it, or not. To oppoſe ERROR venerable for antiquity and ſpiritual in appearances: to bear your teſtimony againſt SIN without indulgence to benefactor or friend. You are ſet for the defence of the goſpel, and muſt ſtand your ground, *not as pleaſing men but God* [4]. Fear no man's frowns, dread no man's anger, where the welfare of ſouls is concerned; I think the goodneſs

[1] *Rom.* x. 16 [2] *Luke* xiv. 28. [3] *Prov.* xxix. 25. [4] 1 *Theſ.* ii. 4.

and

and juſtice of your cauſe ſhould raiſe you above theſe infirmities.

2. Indulge a benignity of temper; a beneficence and love to mankind. As this ſprings from the nobleſt principle, *the deſire of publick good*; ſo it feels the greateſt pleaſure in promoting *it*. Difficulties are apt to provoke and exaſperate the mind; *this* will bring an habitual comfort into it, and throw the mantle of charity on others blemiſhes. The prieſthood formerly was an office of mercy, and he was beſt qualified for it, *who could have compaſſion on the ignorant and on thoſe that were out of the way* [1]. 'Tis this noble virtue, *my brethren*, muſt accommodate you to your work, and make you eaſy of acceſs, patient of injuries, candid in cenſure, and really ſuperiour to all the little perplexities of life. 'Tis this will prepare men for your inſtructions, make them willing to be adviſed, when they ſee you love them; and even willing to be reproved, when they ſee you can riſque your health and intereſt to do them good. In ſhort nothing like this to procure an univerſal friendſhip and make you popular and beloved. Let the world ſee that you are animated by this generous principle, and that all your labours are *labours of love*: then you may ſay with the apoſtle, *we ſeek not yours but you* [2]

3. Be prudent. Prudence is a virtue that muſt not only render your other qualifications ſerviceable; but prevent many unneceſſary troubles to your ſelves. 'Tis not enough that the man of God be learned and honeſt, he muſt not want *a ſpirit of government*. 'Tis prudence muſt help you to judge of times and ſeaſons, perſons and things, *and to chooſe the moſt likely means for promoting the*

[1] *Heb.* v. 2. [2] 2 *Cor.* xii. 14.

ends

ends of your miniſtry [1] I mean prudence conſiſtent with integrity and honeſty. Such our maſter hath recommended to us, and with a view to the difficulty of his ſervice; *behold I ſend you forth as ſheep in the midſt of wolves: be ye therefore wiſe as ſerpents and harmleſs as doves* [2]. Prudence thus qualified is a cardinal virtue, and many times attended with the moſt important conſequences. You cannot therefore neglect it without great ſin. If it be aſked whether prudence can fall ſo much under a man's choice, as this ſuppoſes, I anſwer, It may be attained to a good degree by diligent obſervation. It may be prayed for as a divine gift, and ſo far within our reach; *if any lack wiſdom let him ask it of God* [3]. At leaſt, no one will deny, but that it falls under a man's choice, whether he will meddle with an office, that requires ſuch a qualification, or not. I am confident, *my brethren*, you will have occaſion to give frequent proofs of this virtue in life. In avoiding levities of converſation, and even ſome freedoms which may be allowable in other men; in chooſing the proper ſeaſon of counſel, and the right method to wear away honeſt well-meaning prejudices; in governing your own paſſions, and diſengaging your ſelves from the incidental effects of other mens; but eſpecially in regulating your conduct when controverſies trouble the church. Here you muſt act prudently, if you would not betray the leaſt truth on the one hand; or obſtruct a needful reformation on the other: if you would not enter into the views of AMBITIOUS and INTERESTED men; or indeed

[1] Quæ eſt rerum expetendarum, fugiendarumque ſcientia. *Cic. off.* 1. 43. [2] *Matt.* x. 16. Prudentia ſine juſtitia nihil valeat ad faciendam fidem. Quo enim quis verſutior, & callidior eſt, hoc inviſior & ſuſpectior, detracta opinione probitatis. *Cic. off.* 2. 9. [3] *Jam.* i. 5.

do

do ſo much ſervice to error, as to make the pulpit on every occaſion, the ſcene of controverſy and cenſure. I am perſuaded a vaſt deal of miſchief has been done this way, and that put into people's heads, which no body is able to get out again. This will not ſeem ſtrange to thoſe who have ſtudied humane nature, and obſerved what a charm there is in novelty, and how naturally compaſſion draws us to the ſuffering ſide. Be prudent then, and ſhew a proper concern for TRUTH, PEACE and LIBERTY. Liberty, I ſay, without which truth and peace are precarious bleſſings. Liberty the guard of truth, the baſis of reformation, the pillar on which (under God) the whole fabrick of religion depends: this liberty muſt be your beloved care. Thus you ſee, in what conjunctures prudence will be neceſſary. Let this virtue regulate all your meaſures, and direct you *what*, and *when*, and *to whom* you ſpeak; that you *may cut off occaſion from thoſe, who deſire occaſion* [1].

This is the advice, which appeared to me ſuitable to a difficult work. Give me leave to conſider it in another view, and from thence continue my exhortation to you.

II. I obſerve in the next place, the ſervice you have undertaken is a GREAT and IMPORTANT one. Conſider its objects, ends, and iſſues, and I will take leave to ſay, the greateſt of life. It aims at no leſs than the advancement of the Creator's glory, in the reſtitution of his creatures to his favour, and the poſſeſſion of divine virtues, and beatitudes. The MEAN for accompliſhing this deſign, is no leſs glorious than important; namely, the miniſtries of the Son of God. Whoſe perſonal greatneſs

[1] 2 *Cor.* xi. 12.

and

and divinity, as it heightens the love of God in ſending him; ſo it raiſes the value of his ſacrifice, the authority of his example, and throws a diſtinguiſhing glory upon the whole work of our redemption. Where this deſign obtains its effect, it brings unſpeakable advantages into private and ſocial life: and then by the good pleaſure of God leads to eternal felicities. On the other hand, where it is neglected and deſpiſed, it expoſes men to miſery in both worlds. Now all this, *my brethren*, ſo far as it can fall under humane overſight and care, is *committed to you*. To you, as *ſtewards of the myſteries of God* [1]. As ſuch you are *intruſted* with the intereſts of the Redeemer, to make him known, and make him glorious in all his offices of mediation. You are *intruſted* with the care of ſouls, to warn them of their danger, to win them over to a love of virtue, and point out the ſhining paths of life. You are *intruſted* with the oracles of God; to diſpenſe faithfully and preſerve inviolably that body of ſacred truths. You are *intruſted* with the honour of religious aſſemblies; that there the ſeveral offices of religion may be done *decently and in order* [2]. Finally you are to convey this ſame truſt to others after you, of whoſe capacity and integrity you ſhall have no reaſon to doubt; *faithful men, who ſhall be able to teach others alſo* [3].

This is the charge you have taken upon you. It undoubtedly calls for a ſuitable management; and if I ſpeak of that with ſome freedom, it is my own duty, rather than your information, which makes it neceſſary. Let me exhort you therefore in the

[1] 1 *Cor.* iv. 1. [2] 1 *Cor* xiv. 40 [3] 2 *Tim.* ii. 2.

1. Place, to ſhew your abilities and ſkill in the conduct of this deſign. The miniſter of religion ſhould be able to explain things according to their true nature and importance; to recommend them in a manner, that will be pleaſing and inſtructive. *He muſt be one apt to teach* [1]; *rightly dividing the word of truth* [2]; and *wiſe to win ſouls* [3]. 'Twould carry me beyond the bounds of time, and perhaps decency, to be very particular here. However give me leave to offer a few things, which, I apprehend, deſerve attention; and would ſhew you *workmen that need not be aſhamed.* For inſtance,

I conceive ſome regard ſhould be had to the choice of the text. If I would repreſent the deceitfulneſs of our own hearts, I ſhould not chooſe to ground my diſcourſe on that paſſage, (unleſs it was to correct the miſapplication of it) *The heart is deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked, who can know it* [4]? For the prophet is not there ſpeaking of our own hearts, but other mens. He is diſſuading from a diſtruſt of God in our afflictions, and having a recourſe (as is too common in ſuch caſes) to humane aids. His reaſon is this, becauſe men at beſt are changeable creatures, and many times, under fair ſhews of ſincerity and friendſhip, cover miſchievous deſigns. To infer from hence, that men cannot know their own moral temper, is not only to affirm againſt experience, but to introduce an univerſal ſcepticiſm into religion. It diſcourages all trials of our ſincerity, and really undermines the evidences of our comfort and hope. That deceitfulneſs of the heart we are in danger from, is the reaſoning wrong from our own prejudices, and aſſuring our ſelves becauſe our preſent frame is good, that it will be ſo here-

[1] 2 *Tim.* ii. 24. [2] 2 *Tim.* ii. 15. [3] *Prov.* xi. 30. [4] *Jer.* xvii. 9.

after.

after. Here 'tis true we are apt to impoſe upon our ſelves; but the prophet had nothing of this in view. Again, if I would expoſe the great danger of indifference in religion, I ſhould not take that for my text, *And Gallio cared for none of theſe things* [1]. Becauſe that would be to bring him under an ill character, in a caſe where he appears to have acted the part of a good magiſtrate. He ſhewed himſelf ready to decide any controverſy of right or wrong, and puniſh vice; but he could not apprehend his power extended to religious diſputes. If BIGOTS will call in the civil authority, to cruſh thoſe who diſſent from them, for his part he will be no judge of ſuch matters; and cared not to be made the TOOL of Jewiſh Prieſts. This is ſufficient to let you ſee what I mean, my reaſon for it is this. Texts of ſcripture inſufficiently urged, ſerve only to diſcover the preacher's weakneſs, and never more ſo, than when he builds on them as a foundation.

As to ſubjects of diſcourſe, thoſe undoubtedly ought to have the preference, which are of greateſt moment. Such as St. *Paul* mentions in his charge to the miniſters of *Epheſus*; namely, *Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jeſus Chriſt* [2]. All the parts of religion are not of equal value in God's account, who *prefers mercy before ſacrifice*, neither ſhould they be in ours. The END of religion, I conceive, ſhould have our principal regards, which is no other than *to become really good and virtuous*. The MEANS ſhould be conſidered in the next degree of excellency, ſuch as *knowledge, faith, prayer, hearing the word, and receiving the ſacraments*. Their value is from the influence they have upon the end, and without this,

[1] *Acts* xviii. 17. [2] *Acts* xx. 21.

they are uſeleſs in chriſtianity. Finally, the MODES and CIRCUMSTANCES of religion, being more remote from the end than the means are, muſt conſequently be of leſs conſideration, ſuch as *time, place, habit, geſture, and all other rites and ceremonies uſed in divine worſhip* [1]. Such a recommendation of things according to their different moments, will direct the attention and zeal of your people to its proper place; and teach them not to lay *a great ſtreſs upon little things*, which is the very eſſence of SUPERSTITION. I need not deſcend to more particulars, only let me add, as you are *chriſtian divines*, you ought, on proper occaſions, to vindicate the grounds of chriſtianity [2]. Not only ſhew it to be a regular ſyſtem in it ſelf; but a compleat body of laws both as to faith and manners, and perfectly conſiſtent with NATURAL and ETERNAL PRINCIPLES. Theſe have the firſt and ſtrongeſt poſſeſſion of us; theſe were deſigned by our Creator as the proper meaſures of judging right and wrong, truth and falſhood: conſequently whatever contradicts theſe, muſt at the ſame

[1] Vid. *Tillotſ.* fol. *v.* 2. *p.* 280. [2] It is to be wiſhed, the learned Gentlemen, engaged in defence of this noble cauſe, would take this opportunity of throwing aſide the hay and ſtubble, which have been laid on the foundation of chriſtianity: of diſclaiming thoſe PASSIVE SLAVISH principles, which really undermine the natural rights of CONSCIENCE, and SOCIETY. An apprehenſion from ſuch principles is, I am perſuaded, one great motive to the preſent zeal for deiſm. Men obſerving how chriſtianity has been made the inſtrument of deſtroying the rights and liberties of mankind, have conceived unreaſonable prejudices againſt it. Whereas in truth genuine chriſtianity has no ſuch unfriendly influences. It would improve our temporal intereſts with truth and innocence; and leave us in the full poſſeſſion of all our NATURAL RIGHTS. Whoever looks upon chriſtianity in that DRESS, it is preſented to us in the popiſh world, if he is a lover of truth, his country, and mankind, will undoubtedly prefer honeſt heatheniſm before it.

time

time ſhock the credit and authority of chriſtianity. You know how to urge it, *my brethren*, with great advantage, in ſupport of the excellency and neceſſity of revealed religion, that HUMANE REASONINGS were not able to find out an unqueſtionable ground of hope for ſinners under the LAW OF NATURE. Let that law be ever ſo extenſive and perfect in it ſelf; yet the great maſters of reaſon, before Chriſt, could not give, in the caſe of guilt, any firm and clear aſſurance of divine forgiveneſs. SINCERE REPENTANCE, I ſuppoſe, will be urged; but with what certainty, till this point is firſt determined, whether the ſinner's puniſhment or pardon will be the more neceſſary to the ends of government. And who muſt determine that, but the ſupreme magiſtrate of the univerſe [1]? Nay ſuppoſing the *acceptableneſs* of ſincere repentance; yet even then, it muſt reſt in the DIVINE WILL, how this pardon ſhall be qualified, and in what MANNER it ſhall be diſpenſed. Here humane reaſonings have failed to give ſatisfaction; but revelation hath aſſured us of God's mercy, and in ſuch a way, as will ſhew, both his abhorrence of the ſin, and his acceptance of the ſinner through JESUS CHRIST. As *diſſenting proteſtant divines* you ſhould, I think, occaſionally maintain the grounds of NONCONFORMITY. Theſe, I take to be the very ſame with thoſe principles on which the REFORMATION was built; namely, that no religion can be properly deemed a reaſonable ſervice, but what is the effect of perſonal choice; that every man's CONSCIENCE is the guide of his own actions; and conſequently that he has a right to judge and

[1] As once he thought fit to puniſh the apoſtacy of angels; though he was pleaſed to enter into merciful and forgiving meaſures, with regard to the ſins of mankind. *Heb.* ii. 16.

chooſe

chooſe for himſelf in religion; that though he may be miſtaken, yet he cannot be obliged to act contrary to his preſent ſenſe of things by any powers on earth. *If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not*, ſaid the Saviour of the world [1]. After this, for any one to take it upon him to determine my faith, with an authority that ſhall oblige the conſcience, he muſt be both unjuſt and cruel, without firſt proving to me, that he is INFALLIBLE and ſo cannot miſlead me; or if that be too much, at leaſt, that, ſhould he miſlead me, I ſhall not ſuffer for it when I come to ſtand before the laſt tribunal. You will not, *my brethren*, do juſtice to the nobleſt cauſe, [*viz.* LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE for which our fathers were the martyrs of the laſt age] if you do not aſſert it, againſt a claim of power of determining mens faith; a power boundleſs and infinite; a power which ever did diſturb the church's peace, and ever will obſtruct the church's reformation; a power we ſee in the popiſh world, in all its effect and glory. But then, *my brethren*, whilſt you are thus ſhewing a proper concern for truth and liberty, charity muſt not be proſcribed. You will chooſe to ſpeak of theſe things in the language and ſpirit of the goſpel; then if you cannot convince men, you won't make them uneaſy. Whatever ſubject you inſiſt on, I think, matters of curioſity and ſtrange in their aſſertion ſhould be avoided. The marvelous and the wonderful ſerves rather to amuſement than inſtruction. Keep to the great, good OLD TRUTHS, and ſet them off in the moſt advantageous light you are able.

As to ſtyle and manner of delivery, theſe give ſuch ornaments and charms to truth, that you will not

[1] *John* xii. 47.

think

think them below your regards. They ought undoubtedly to be our particular care, ſince extraordinary gifts fail. I will not preſume to offer my ſentiments on thoſe heads; only as to one of them let me ſay, we ſhould take care that politeneſs and learning may not raiſe our language above the common level. Plain common ſenſe can feel the powers of eloquence, and admire what it cannot imitate. The great father of oratory courted the applauſe of the people, and thought, if he could pleaſe them, he had no reaſon to fear the cenſure of the learned, who muſt be equally pleaſed [1]. This is my firſt advice in the conduct of your great work.

2. Be faithful, *it is required in ſtewards*, ſuch you are, *that a man be found faithful*, i. e. true to his truſt [2]. *He accounted me faithful putting me into the miniſtry* [3]. *The ſame commit thou to faithful men* [4]. Now, *my brethren*, if you would give the world, and our maſter the proper evidences of your fidelity, you muſt

Declare the whole counſel of God, i. e. all he hath made neceſſary to the ſalvation of mens ſouls. You muſt deal plainly, if you would deal faithfully here. We may deſire to become all things to all men; but then we muſt not lead them into falſe views of religion, or accommodate thoſe prejudices, which will obſtruct their comfort and perfection. Suppoſe you knew principles of religion, that were more taking to ſome ears, than others; and rather than hazard your intereſt or reputation, you confine your ſelves to theſe, and

[1] Eloquentiam autem meam populo probari velim. Etenim neceſſe eſt, qui ita dicat, ut a multitudine probetur, eundem doctis probari, &c. *Cic.* in *Brut.* 49. [2] 1 *Cor.* iv. 2. [3] 1 *Tim.* i. 12. [4] 2 *Tim.* ii. 2.

neglected

neglected others equally important; what would this be but to daub with untempered mortar, and propheſy ſmooth things? Would you, *my brethren*, recommend faith to your people? Be ſo juſt as to tell them at the ſame time, that faith without works is a uſeleſs thing in chriſtianity [1]. Would you exalt the free grace of God to ſinners? Tell them there is certainly a receiving this grace in vain [2]. Would you eſtabliſh the righteouſneſs of Chriſt as the only ground of our acceptance? Let them know, this will by no means excuſe a perſonal righteouſneſs [3]. Would you affect them with their ſin and miſery? Comfort them alſo, with that covenant of repentance and life, which they are now all under [4]. Would you aſſure them that they can do nothing ſavingly without God? Inform them too, that God will ordinarily do nothing without them [5]. You muſt be as plain in repreſenting theſe things, as the goſpel is. It does not become you to conſult mens inclinations, ſo much as their ſafety: not ſo much what they are willing to hear, as what they ought. I do the more earneſtly recommend this, with a view to the ANTINOMIANS, who pretend to be under a more ſpiritual diſpenſation of the goſpel, and to enjoy a more extraordinary divine preſence, and illumination, than others: which is the height of ENTHUSIASM. We hear nothing from them more frequently than ſome of thoſe principles before mentioned. But then, they have quite changed

[1] *Jam.* ii. 26. [2] 2 *Cor.* vi. 1. 2 *Pet.* ii. 21. *ibid.* iii. 17. [3] *Tit.* ii. 11, 12. 1 *Pet.* ii. 24. 2 *Pet.* i. 4, 11. 1 *John* iii. 7. 2 *Cor.* vii. 1. [4] *Mark* xvi. 15, 16. *John* iii. 16. *Rom.* vi. 13, 14. 1 *Tim.* iv. 10. *ibid.* ii. 1, — 6. 1 *John* ii. 1, 2. *Heb.* ii. 9. 1 *Theſ.* v. 9. 2 *Pet.* iii. 9. [5] 1 *Chron.* xxviii. 9. 2 *Chron.* xv. 2. *Matt.* vii. 7. *Rom.* viii. 13. 1 *Cor.* iii. 9. *Philip.* ii. 12, 13. *ibid.* iv. 6, — 9.

the

the notion of them, from what our fathers underſtood them. Notwithſtanding the ſameneſs of ſounds, Mr. *Baxter* tells us, *they are founded in groſs ignorance, and tend to groſs wickedneſs* [1]. Neither ſhould I have mentioned them on this occaſion, but that I am certain they deſtroy the vitals of *practical religion.* You will certainly think it your duty here, to diſtinguiſh *between the precious and the vile*; and your happineſs, that you have none, *in theſe parts*, of this complexion.

So likewiſe, *my brethren*, if you would be faithful, you muſt declare nothing but the counſel of God. Your inſtructions are already drawn up for you by Chriſt himſelf, and you are not at liberty to vary from them. *Teaching them* (ſays our maſter) *to obſerve whatſoever I have cammanded you* [2]. You have no right to alter the terms of ſalvation; to preſcribe new laws in Chriſt's kingdom; or put a greater IMPORTANCE on things than he hath done, and make that NECESSARY, which neither he or his apoſtles have *told* us are ſo. Theſe things, *my brethren*, were long ſince ſettled by a proper authority; and there is no room left for humane inventions, or additions. Rather let us *fairly and honeſtly* diſclaim every ſuch pretence, and ſay with the apoſtle, *we have not dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy* [3].

Finally to approve your faithfulneſs, you durſt not countenance an UNWARRANTABLE DEPENDANCE on your ſelves. For inſtance,

You muſt not encourage an opinion, as if the favour and anger of God were at your diſpoſal. The truſt is too great for fallible creatures, and vaſtly more liable to be abuſed by our paſſions and prejudices than uſed aright. And in all po-

[1] Pref. to his Saint's reſt. [2] *Matt.* xxviii. 20. [3] 2 *Cor.* i. 24.

ſitive inſtitutions, ſuppoſed to be the effect of infinite wiſdom, I conceive, the argument, from the more likely abuſe of powers, to their never having been once granted, will undoubtedly conclude.

Again, You durſt not indulge the conceit, as if the efficacy of ſacraments depended on your orders, orthodoxy or gifts. Would not this be the way to lead men into infinite ſcruples about the CERTAINTY of theſe things? Would it not ſerve to weaken mens regards for real piety, and goodneſs? So long as they apprehended the bleſſing of ordinances to be connected with your qualifications, rather than their own religious diſpoſitions, they will not be very forward to become good themſelves.

Once more, You durſt not inſinuate, as if you had a power of forgiving ſins. This muſt ſuppoſe the knowledge of mens hearts, with the ſeveral motives and ends of their profeſſed repentance. That paſſage of our Saviour's will by no means juſtify ſuch a claim, *whoſoever ſins ye remit they are remitted*; *whoſoever ſins ye retain they are retained* [1]. For I obſerve, 1.) This power, whatever it was, was given to apoſtles; perſons of an extraordinary character, and as ſuch, were never deſigned to have any ſucceſſors in the church. Conſequently what belonged peculiarly to them, cannot in reaſon be applied to perſons of an inferior order [2]. 2.) 'Tis unreaſonable, *to ſay no worſe of*

[1] *John* xx. 23. [2] I cannot think but that this power of *remitting and retaining ſins*, ſo ſolemnly conferred on the apoſtles by our Saviour, had ſomething in it that was miraculous, and extraordinary, and did ſuppoſe the knowledge of mens hearts, and that they were not miſtaken in the application of this power to particular perſons; and conſequently, that in that miraculous and extraordinary degree, it was PECULIAR to the apoſtles and their times, &c. Archb. *Tillot.* fol. *v.* 3. *p.* 507.

it,

it, to claim their power, without their qualification. You find, before Chriſt gave this power, he *breathed on them and ſaid*, (dictum factum) *receive ye the* HOLY GHOST; *whoſoever ſins, &c.* If then the apoſtles were authoriſed by this commiſſion to forgive ſins, they were certainly qualified to do ſo. They were immediately inſpired by the Holy Ghoſt, and, under ſuch an influence, infallibly ſecured in the right uſe of that power: which, I preſume, is more than will be ſaid of ordinary paſtors. But, 3.) It does not appear to me after all, that our Saviour intended here, to convey any ſuch power of forgiving ſins to the apoſtles themſelves; but only an extraordinary gift of HEALING. When our Saviour cured the paralytick, he expreſſed himſelf thus, *Son, be of good cheer thy ſins are forgiven thee* [1]. This cannot mean, I releaſe thee from the obligation to puniſhment for thy ſins in the next world: becauſe according to Chriſt's own goſpel, that required a perſonal faith and repentance, whereas this favour here, was granted on the faith of others. Neither does it appear, that our Saviour deſigned any more than to cure him; and therefore when his enemies took exception at his words, he explained them as equivalent to *ariſe and walk*, i. e. be cured of thy diſtemper. The law of *Moſes* threatned various kinds of diſtempers as temporary puniſhments for ſin [2], and ſo we need not wonder that ſickneſs and ſin, recovery and forgiveneſs ſhould be ſo frequently joined together [3]. Hence it came to be the general opinion, that diſeaſes were inflicted for ſin [4]; though indeed it was abuſed by ſome to great un-

[1] *Matt.* ix. 2. Vid. *Whitby.* [2] *Lev.* xxvi. 16. *Deut.* xxviii. 21, 22. [3] 2 *Sam.* xii. 13. 2 *Chron.* vii. 14. *Pſal.* xxxviii. 3: *ibid.* ciii. 3. *Iſa.* xxxiii. 24. Vid. 1 *Cor.* xi. 30. [4] *John* ix. 2.

charitableneſs, they being ready, with *Job*'s friends, to ſuppoſe the greater the ſufferer the greater the ſinner [1]. Now this being the caſe, that diſtempers were the preſent puniſhments of ſin, to remove or continue the puniſhment, muſt in a fair conſtruction be the ſame as to remit or retain mens ſin. Conſequently no more than a power of releaſing from bodily afflictions, can be reaſonably contended for, from this paſſage; and we don't find from the *Acts* of the apoſtles, they pretended to any more. In ſhort, *my brethren*, your power, or rather office is only to ſhew men faithfully, and explain to them clearly, the TERMS of goſpel-forgiveneſs. If they come up to theſe, their ſins are pardoned in the higheſt ſenſe: if not, the moſt ſolemn ABSOLUTION in the world will have no effect [2]. Thus, *my brethren*, let us deal faithfully with

[1] *Luke* xiii. 2. [2] I cannot but obſerve in this place, what care the church of *Rome* has taken to create an abſolute dependance upon her prieſts. So it will be, when men grow fond of a PUBLICK LEADING in religion, SLAVERY muſt be the end. In the firſt place, the people in this church muſt renounce their reaſon and underſtanding, and their very ſenſes too, to receive whatever impreſſions their prieſts ſhall make upon them. 'Tis their ſanction makes truth, falſhood, and at another time, falſhood, faith.

To raiſe the power and reverence of the prieſt yet further, he is ſuppoſed to have the KEYS of the kingdom of heaven, *Matt.* xvi. 19. i. e. *a ſacred, ghoſtly authority of* REDUCING *ſinners*, (i. e. all ſuch as they are pleaſed to call ſo) *to repentance, and in caſe of obſtinacy, to lock heaven's door againſt them, with ſuch effect that none in heaven or earth can unlock it, without his conſent.* Under the force of ſuch a belief, what can the people do leſs than fall down and adore him. Oh how difficult, how infinitly hazardous is ſalvation in this church! A man may do all that is poſſible for him to do, towards his ſalvation; and yet it ſhall be in the power of his fellow creatures after all, whether he ſhall be ſaved or not. The giving the keys to *Peter* in the forecited text, carries this plain alluſion in it, that as a key is to open a gate or door which leads to ſome building; ſo he ſhould have

with the ſouls committed to our care, neither flatter their prejudices, nor impoſe upon their credulity; for the eye of God is upon us: but,

3. Beſeech God for his continual preſence and bleſſing with you. It muſt be ſtrangely aſſuming in us, to think our ſelves anſwerable to ſuch a charge, when an apoſtle cries out *who is ſufficient for theſe things* [1]? The minds of men muſt be prepared for our inſtructions, or what *manner of entering in ſhall we have to them*, or how ſhall we

have the honour of opening the firſt chriſtian church in the world, as he had both among *Jews* and *Gentiles*. To gather the firſt church, and to be the firſt inſtrument of planting chriſtianity, after our Saviour's aſcenſion, was an action that could be done but once. 'Twas an honour which began and ended in this apoſtle, and therefore to ſuppoſe him to have any ſucceſſors in it, is ridiculous becauſe impoſſible. The *binding* and *looſing* in the ſame paſſage is allow'd to be the ſame with the *remitting* and *retaining ſins*, which has been conſider'd above.

Then 'tis decreed under an anathema, that to the due adminiſtration of ſacraments, an INTENTION in the miniſter, of doing at leaſt what the church does, is requiſite; and what can they do leſs after this, than to keep him always in good humour, leſt he ſhould be ſo froward or cruel as to deny them the ſovereign benefit of his intention. By the ſame authority ſecret CONFESSION to the prieſt, of all and every mortal ſin with its circumſtances, is made neceſſary to ſalvation; and what more requiſite to govern men, than to underſtand their true moral temper; and what more to awe them, than to get poſſeſſion of thoſe ſecrets, which ſhame or intereſt oblige them to conceal. To ſupport theſe injunctions, they take care to make the people POOR, draining their ſubſtance by a thouſand channels into the church: or if they are poor, to keep them ſo, by making them IDLE. To this nothing contributes more than their SAINTS-DAYS, which take up above half the year. And to crown all, their ECCLESIASTICAL COURTS, and terrible INQUISITON are the ſure ſupports of this prieſtly bondage. If a man had no other views than to this world, he could not but abhor a religion that brings mankind into ſuch a ſubjection. His love to his COUNTRY would lead him to it; his love to POSTERITY, for though he himſelf may be low, they may riſe to ſome diſtinction in a free ſtate.

[1] 2 *Cor.* ii. 16.

per-

perſuade them to *ſerve the living God?* No, ſhining gifts, or ſkillful addreſs are vain without divine aid. Such is the ſtate of humane nature ſince its CORRUPTION, that ſomething beſides moral ſuaſion is neceſſary to its recovery: that can only convince men their duty is reaſonable; but to overcome their weakneſs, and enable them to purſue theſe convictions into life, ſomething more than light is requiſite, even POWER *to perform that which is good*; which in our ſelves *we find not* [1]. *Paul may plant and Apollos water*, the moſt able miniſters be employ'd; but 'tis *God* after all *muſt give that increaſe* [2]. Pray then, for the happy conjuncture, when you may ſpeak to men in their tender frames, and calm hours of reflection. Then, as the apoſtle expreſſes it, we ſhall be *workers together with God* [3]; and by a concurrence of divine and miniſterial influences, may hope to prevail. Beſeech the Father of ſpirits, that when you make *the report of the goſpel, his arm might be revealed* at the ſame time [4]. Let him be eyed and owned this way in your miniſtrations, or you will not give him the glory due to his name. *We have this treaſure in earthen veſſels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us* [5].

I ſee my time is too far gone, to inſiſt largely on other matters: but having told you, it is a difficult and important work you have undertaken, I ſhould not be juſt, *my brethren*, if I did not obſerve in the

III. Place for your encouragement, that it is a GOOD one too. *He that deſireth the office of a biſhop* or goſpel miniſter *deſireth a good work* [6]. 'Tis HONOURABLE. *I magnify mine office.* You ſerve the

[1] *Rom.* vii. 18. [2] 1 *Cor.* iii. 5. 7. [3] 2 *Cor.* vi. 1.
[4] *Rom.* x. 16. [5] 2 *Cor.* iv. 7. [6] 1 *Tim.* iii. 1.

King

King of heaven and earth, who condeſcends in ſome meaſure to make uſe of your agency in accompliſhing the vaſt deſigns of his providence and grace; *for perfecting his ſaints and edifying the body of Chriſt* [1]. 'Tis PLEASURABLE, if it be pleaſing to be doing good. The miniſtry is an office of charity to mankind. 'Tis to lead the blind, to comfort the dejected, to eſtabliſh the virtuous; 'tis to reform and beautify the world, and raiſe this clod to a ſhining ſtar. Finally, tis REWARDABLE. I don't mean in this world. Here you can't project great matters for your ſelves. Yet give me leave to offer this teſtimony to the goodneſs of our maſter, he has never left any of his faithful ſervants deſtitute of proper comforts and ſupports; and ſometimes has thrown unexpected occaſions of advantage in their way. However your views muſt be carried higher, and your labours carried on, under the motives of faith and hope. You may expect glorious things from the retributions of the laſt day; *for when the chief ſhepherd ſhall appear, you ſhall receive a crown of glory, that fadeth not away* [2].

This is a pleaſing theme; but I muſt leave it to your better meditations, exhorting you, *my brethren*,

1. To enter this good ſervice with all imaginable cheerfulneſs. It cannot be thought we have a juſt notion of our duty, when we ſet about it with reluctancy: or that we ſhall make much of it, when it goes againſt the grain. No, with ſuch a temper, we ſhall rather conſider it as a taſk, and as a taſk run through it with little decency or affection. When genius and inclination lead into a deſign, we are likely to make ſome comfortable

[1] *Epheſ.* iv. 12. [2] 1 *Pet.* v. 4.

pro-

progreſs in it. This will animate us to watchfulneſs, patience, and conſtancy in our labours, and ſmooth every rugged way. Nothing leſs than the heart does our maſter expect from us, and nothing more does he require. For, where we can beſtow no benefit, 'tis the honeſt intention and good will muſt give a value to the ſervice. *Wherefore feed the flock of God, taking the overſight thereof, not by conſtraint but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind* [1].

2. Be diligent to ſecure the ends of this excellent miniſtry. To be diligent is the way to make your own talents ſpread and improve. 'Tis this muſt recommend you to man's favour, and give you any reaſonable aſſurance of God's bleſſing. *To him that hath* i. e. improv'd his talents, *to him ſhall more be given* [2]. I am confident a great work requires ſuch a qualification, and a good one deſerves it. Of all men 'tis ſad for us to loiter, when the wants of ſouls are many, and the opportunities of ſervice uncertain: 'tis dreadful, when we muſt *watch for ſouls as thoſe that muſt give account* [3]. Be diligent therefore, *my brethren*, to know the ſtate of your flock, and fulfil the miniſtry you have received. Go on in this encouragement, that every ſoul you add to Chriſt, will add a luſtre to your crown. *For theſe are our glory and our joy at the coming of Chriſt* [4].

3. This ſhould for ever endear your maſter unto you. 'Tis the duty of every chriſtian *to ſhew forth the praiſes of him who hath called them* [5]; eſpecially of miniſters, who are diſtinguiſhed in this call. Now the propereſt way of expreſſing this, is by a ſincere love. Love is a principle active and ge-

[1] *Pet.* v. 2. [2] *Mat.* xxv. 29. [3] *Heb.* xiii. 17.
[4] 1 *Theſ.* ii. 20. [5] 1 *Pet.* ii. 9.

nerous,

nerous, and never fails to return upon the ſervice in the moſt happy influences. 'Tis love to Chriſt will engage you to preach him. I don't mean the NAMING him often in a ſermon; (*though for my part I can't ſee how that important name ſhould ſpoil an handſome period: or how we can excuſe naming him, when by his commiſſion we act, and from him expect our reward*) but as the apoſtle ſays, to preach him LORD and KING in his own church, the head of all divine influences, and to whom people's principal regards ſhould be drawn, and not to our SELVES. *We preach not our ſelves* (i. e. our ſelves your Lords and Maſters) *but Chriſt Jeſus Lord; and our ſelves your ſervants for Jeſus ſake* [1]. 'Tis this ſame principle will animate you againſt difficulties, and enable you to face a frowning world. 'Tis this will carry you above mean ends in his ſervice, and make you ſcorn to diſſemble, flatter, or bow down to any baſeneſs. 'Tis this will engage you to love his friends, and *be willing to ſpend and be ſpent for them* [2]. This laſt conſideration ought to be the more attended to, becauſe Chriſt himſelf hath made it a ſuitable expreſſion of our love to him. *If thou loveſt me*, ſaid he to *Peter*, *feed my ſheep* [3]. O when we feel the power of this love, how will it turn duty into delight, and our very labours into recreations? But I need not inſiſt further on this, when it hath been ſo excellently recommended to you in the ſermon.

Theſe, *my brethren*, are the principles by which, I conceive, the miniſterial office ſhould be conducted. So far as they are agreeable to Chriſt and his truths, I beſeech you to obſerve them. Eſpecially urge on PRACTICAL RELIGION with all fervency and plainneſs. You are to hold out a light

[1] 2 *Cor.* iv. 5. [2] 2 *Cor.* xii. 15. [3] *John* xxi. 16.

to the conſciences of men, let it not be obſcur'd. You are to recommend truth, which only wants to be ſeen, to be admir'd. Let ERROR creep into the ſhade, and by diſtance create a falſe reverence. Let HYPOCRISY paint and hide her ſelf behind a religious face. Truth, honeſty, and plainneſs here are neceſſary and can appear without a veil. And though the tongue may be againſt us, we have this ſatisfaction to know, the conſcience will be an advocate for us. *Wherefore renounce the hidden things of diſhoneſty, not walking in craftineſs, not handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifeſtation of the truth, commend your ſelves to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God* [1].

I ſhould have made an end here, and tried your patience, *my brethren*, no further; but that I muſt draw one inference from the whole: and it is of ſuch conſequence to your function, that all other qualifications are vain without it; namely, your work in every view obliges you to HOLINESS OF LIFE. There is in every character ſomething peculiar and diſtinguiſhing, and if that be wanting, the character muſt ſink in its appearance, and loſe its authority and value with all good judges. *If one*, ſays *Cicero*, *who profeſſes himſelf a grammarian ſhould talk barbarouſly; or he that ſets up for a great muſician ſhould ſing out of tune, ſuch an one would be the more ridiculous, becauſe he blunder'd in that very art of which he profeſſes himſelf a maſter: ſo a philoſopher* (much more a divine, who is to teach piety and virtue) *who offends in the conduct of life, is the more infamous; becauſe he is out in that very profeſſion, he would be thought maſter of, and offends againſt thoſe rules, in which he pre-*

[1] 2 *Cor.* iv. 2.

tends

tends to inſtruct others [1]. Your character, *my brethren*, is holy, your lives ſhould be ſo too; your buſineſs is to do good to others, which cannot be expected, unleſs you are thought to be good men. For, who will believe, that you are heartily perſuaded of thoſe truths, you recommend to them, when you can ſo eaſily contradict them in your own practice: or that you are really concerned for their ſalvation, when you are ſo negligent of your own? Men will be apt to reaſon from the ill lives of miniſters to the diſadvantage of religion, and conclude it all cheat and impoſture, when they ſee thoſe ſo little governed by it, who are ſuppoſed to underſtand it beſt. At leaſt their examples will be encouraging, the influence of which, univerſal experience tells us, is more engaging than the beſt precepts: nay in this caſe ſo certain, that the ſcripture has paſſed it into a kind of proverb, LIKE PEOPLE, LIKE PRIEST [2]. So that a wicked miniſter is really a publick miſchief, and likely to damn more ſouls by his ill life, than to help ſave by his good preaching.

The MORAL CHARACTER is ſo eſſential to the honour and ſucceſs of our function, that I will not fear to ſay, a bad miniſter (by him I mean, one who lives in the practice of any vice, which the goſpel declares to be a bar to heaven [3]) I ſay, I will not fear to aſſert, that ſuch a miniſter has really no MISSION, no authority from Chriſt; and

[1] Ut enim, ſi grammaticum ſe profeſſus quiſpiam, barbarè loquatur, aut ſi abſurdè canat is, qui ſe haberi velit muſicum, hoc turpior ſit, quòd in eo ipſo peccet, cujus profitetur ſcientiam: ſic philoſophus in ratione vitæ peccans, hoc turpior eſt, quòd in officio, cujus magiſter eſſe vult, labitur, artemque vitæ profeſſus, delinquit in vita. *Cic. Tuſc.* II. 4. [2] *Hoſ.* iv. 9. [3] 1 *Cor.* vi. 9.

ought to have no countenance or encouragement from his church.

FIRST, A miniſter of ill morals has really no miſſion or authority from CHRIST. 'Twould be abſurd to ſuppoſe it; that he ſhould put faction in power, authorize an enemy to take care of his intereſt, or ſet an infidel at the head of believers. Had we no direction from him in his word about this point, the abſurdity and unreaſonableneſs of the thing would be a ſufficient indication of his mind. Whatever bars the office againſt a man, will as certainly thruſt him out of it again. 'Tis ſo in every other inſtance of delegated power, much more in this, where the conſequences are ſo important. But really our Saviour has determined upon this caſe, and we cannot be at a loſs to know what his will is. Thus he tell his diſciples, who were to be employed in propagating his religion in the world, *ye are the ſalt of the earth*, i. e. by the influence of your doctrine and examples, you are to lead men to virtue, and to keep them from putrifying in their luſt; *but if the ſalt hath loſt its ſavour, &c.* i. e. if miniſters become vicious themſelves, how impoſſible is it, they ſhould do any good to others, and ſeaſon them with a reliſh of virtue! *It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be caſt out* [1]. To the ſame purpoſe St. *Paul* adviſes *Timothy to lay hands ſuddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other mens ſins: keep thy ſelf pure* [2]. He would not have him to be too haſty in this action, but conſider the fitneſs of the perſon to be ordained. The reaſon of this caution was, leſt he ſhould put a wicked man into office, which if he did without due deliberation, he muſt

[1] *Matt.* v. 13. [2] 1 *Tim.* v. 22, 24.

be

be looked upon as an acceſſary to the miſchief he ſhould do. Wherefore that he might keep himſelf pure, he obſerves and adviſes further, *ſome mens ſins are open before hand, going before to judgment, and ſome men they follow after*, i. e. ſome mens vices are ſo apparent, that you will be able to make a judgment of them before ordination, and reject them as unqualified: others do not diſcover ſuch unfitneſs till after ordination, when they ought to be equally excluded. If theſe paſſages prove any thing, it is, that bad men have nothing to do in the paſtoral office, that they can act under no commiſſion from Chriſt, the fountain of all authority. No, *unto the wicked* miniſter, as to the wicked prieſt formerly, *God ſays, what haſt thou to do to declare my ſtatutes, or that thou ſhouldſt take my covenant in thy mouth* [1] I argue then, as *Cicero* did in the caſe of *Clodius*, and ſuch enemies of his country. *Thoſe, whom the laws of* Rome *condemn to baniſhment, are really exiles, though they don't ſtir a foot out of the country:* ſo thoſe miniſters whom the laws of chriſtianity thruſt out of office, are really deſtitute of all authority from Chriſt, how preſuming ſoever they may be to act in his name. *A man's being in a place will not give him a* RIGHT

[1] *Pſal.* l. 16. *Judas* indeed was joined in commiſſion with the other apoſtles, but then, whatever reaſon may be for that procedure, I dare ſay there was not one, to eſtabliſh it as a precedent for our imitation. Nay, and in this extraordinary caſe it is to be obſerved, that he continued no longer in this miniſtry, than his wickedneſs was ſpeculative and in the heart. As ſoon as it came to be known, he is degraded from his office. What muſt become of his INDELIBLE CHARACTER, I leave every one to judge, who will but read, that he fell from this miniſtry not by his death, but tranſgreſſion. *Acts.* i. 25.

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to be there, when in the due execution of laws he ought to be ſomewhere elſe [1].

SECONDLY, A miniſter of ill morals ought to have no countenance or encouragement from the CHRISTIAN CHURCH. Is it to be imagined that a wicked man can ſtand well affected to the great deſign of religion, or that he will faithfully diſcover it, and earneſtly preſs it home upon the conſciences of men? No, every truth is an enemy to him, and every argument for a holy life a reproach to his own; and therefore he will keep out of their way as much as poſſible. Inſtead of the bread of life will not ſuch a one rather give his people ſtones and ſerpents; occaſions of hiſſing and wounding, rather than doctrines of piety? He that can flatter and deceive his own ſoul; he that can palliate and excuſe his own ſins, will undoubtedly make no ſcruple to do the ſame by other mens. Now under ſuch apprehenſions, what people in the world can make themſelves eaſy? Beſides, it ought to be conſidered by chriſtians, that they cannot reaſonably expect a DIVINE BLESSING under the miniſtry of ſuch men. Who can doubt this upon the foot of the former principles, whilſt we voluntarily continue our relation to one whom Chriſt renounces? But the ſcripture will be our guide here. Under the legal diſpenſation, God ſays of wicked paſtors, *they ſhall not proſper* [2], which muſt carry this intimation with it, that he will not make uſe of them as the inſtruments of his grace and bleſſing; and then who will

[1] Omnes ſcelerati, atque impii, quorum tu te ducem eſſe profiteris, quos leges exilio affici volunt, exſules ſunt, etiamſi ſolum non mutarunt——Non igitur ubi quiſque erit, ejus loci JUS tenebit; ſi ibi eum legibus eſſe non oportebit. *Cic. parad.* 4. [2] *Jer.* x. 21.

be

be the ſufferers? Nay he ſays expreſsly by the ſame prophet, *they ſhall not profit this people at all* [1]. Words too plain to need a comment. Under the evangelical diſpenſation, our Saviour is no leſs clear in this point. When he caution'd againſt falſe prophets, telling us we may judge of them *by their fruits*, i. e. their lives and converſations, he adds, *we may as well hope to gather grapes of thorns and figs of thiſtles*, as to receive benefit from the miniſtry of bad men [2]. This will not ſuppoſe the bleſſing of ordinances to depend upon the holineſs of the perſon, who adminiſters them: but really ſhews that it will be ſuſpended, for the people's PERSONAL FAULT in countenancing and adhering to ſuch an enemy of the croſs of Chriſt. Neither will this contradict our Saviour's advice in another paſſage, where he ſays, *the Scribes and Phariſees ſit in* Moſes's *ſeat. All therefore whatſoever they bid you obſerve, that obſerve and do; but do not ye after their work* [3]. His meaning ſurely cannot be, mind what theſe wicked miniſters preach; but not how they live. This would ſcarce be conſiſtent with his repeated caution againſt the leaven of their doctrine [4]. The SEAT of *Moſes*, was the ſeat of JUSTICE. *And it came to paſs on the morrow that* Moſes SAT *to judge the people——When they have a* MATTER *they come unto* ME, *and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the ſtatutes of God and his laws* [5]. In all this he only acted the part of a CIVIL MAGISTRATE. He was certainly no eccleſiaſtical perſon himſelf; and if ſo, what hath his ſeat to do with eccleſiaſtical perſons as ſuch? The *Jewiſh* form of government was at firſt a *theo-*

[1] *Jer.* xxiii. 32. [2] *Matt.* vii. 15, 16. *Vid.* Whitby *in loc.*
[3] *Matt.* xxiii. 1, 2. [4] *Ib.* xvi. 6. 12. *ib.* xv. 6. 9. 14.
[5] *Exod.* xviii. 13. 16.

cracy,

cracy, which might ſeem to infer, that their civil and eccleſiaſtical policy were one and the ſame. But then it ought to be conſider'd, this form ceaſed, when the kingdom became hereditary, and then there enſued as remarkable a difference between civil and religious matters, as in other nations. Nay whilſt this *theocracy* ſubſiſted, there was an obvious diſtinction of their civil courts, as will appear, whether we conſider *their origin*, or *the perſons who preſided in them.* They were firſt inſtituted on the advice of *Moſes*'s father-in-law [1]. And probably the great SANHEDRIM was an effect of the ſame councel, *If thou ſhalt do this thing, and* GOD *ſhall command thee ſo* [2]. At leaſt, the ſeventy which compos'd it, were of the number of thoſe before inſtituted. *Gather unto me ſeventy men of the elders of* Iſrael, *whom thou knoweſt to be the elders of the people, and* OFFICERS *over them* [3]. So that here is a plain difference in their inſtitution from the prieſthood. The perſons who ſate in theſe courts were LAYMEN. *Moreover thou ſhalt provide out of all the people able men ---- and place ſuch over them* [4]. Tho' ſome prieſts ſate on the bench of juſtice, and others aſſiſted as advocates and clerks [5]; yet (as *Cunæus*, and other writers of the *Jewiſh* republick obſerve) they did not ſit there, *ſuo jure*, in right of their prieſthood; but by virtue of their election, as laymen did. Conſequently our Saviour, in the paſſage before us,

[1] *Exod.* xviii. 14. [2] *Ib.* xxiii. [3] *Ib.* xxv. *Numb.* xi. 16. [4] *Exod.* xviii. 21. *Num.* xi. 16. [5] The *Phariſees* were a ſect, and the *Scribes* a profeſſion of men following literature. And, as *Dean Prideaux* obſerves, *Connect.* 2. 343, generally all, that were any way learned among the *Jews*, were in the time of our Saviour and his apoſtles called *Scribes*. If ſo, then there is no reaſon to ſuppoſe the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* here were prieſts. Laymen might ſuſtain either character, and as ſuch our Saviour might eye them on the bench of juſtice.

muſt,

muſt, I think, be underſtood to enjoin obedience to civil magiſtrates. His ſenſe, I take it, is, *though bad men ſhould happen to be in authority, yet if they gave a true interpretation of laws, and impartially adminiſter'd juſtice, they ſhould obey them as magiſtrates, though they ſhould not imitate them as private men.* So that no apology or excuſe can be made from hence for wicked miniſters.

The reſult is, miniſters are under peculiar obligations to preſerve their character clear and free from the appearance of immoralities. It is an apoſtolical conſtitution, that the candidate for the miniſtry ſhould be one, *who had a good report of thoſe that are without* [1], i. e. of heathens, who could judge of manners, though not of other qualifications. What was thought ſo requiſite to an admiſſion into this office certainly ought not to be loſt afterwards: eſpecially when our future uſefulneſs in it, will continually want the aid of PUBLICK ESTEEM.

I hope this diſcourſe will not be thought invidious, or to aim at any thing beſides the honour and uſefulneſs of the miniſterial function. I know of no church and no age, but have ſhewn a proper concern for theſe things. For proof of which, and the uprightneſs of my intentions, I have thrown into the margin, a few quotations of the many, which might be produc'd [2]. And doubt not but

[1] 1 *Tim.* iii. 7. [2] Irenæus ſays, *we ought to withdraw from thoſe presbyters, who ſerve their luſts and have not the fear of God in their hearts*, &c.——Presbyteri qui ſerviunt ſuis voluptatibus, & non præponunt timorem Dei in cordibus ſuis, &c. ab omnibus igitur talibus abſiſtere oportet. iv. 44.

In *Cyprian* we have this judgment of a ſynod, *the people muſt not flatter themſelves, as if they could be innocent, in communicating with a wicked prieſt.* And afterwards, *Wherefore the people, in obedience to God's commands and fear, ought to ſeparate themſelves*

it is the wiſh of good men of all parties, that what the high prieſt wore in his crown, as his motto, might ſhine forth in the lives of chriſtian paſtors, as their glory, HOLINESS TO THE LORD [1].

I ſpeak of theſe things with all imaginable freedom to you, *my brethren*, becauſe ſo agreeable to your own ſenſe of things, and thoſe proofs, you have given the world, of your attachment to TRUTH, LIBERTY and VIRTUE. Go on to be the ſame men. Your examples are drawn into publick view, and muſt be patterns of religion, *in word, in converſation, in charity, in ſpi-*

ſelves from a wicked ruler, and not concern themſelves in the religious acts of a ſacrilegious prieſt. Since they eſpecially had the power of chooſing worthy miniſters, and refuſing the unworthy or wicked. Nec ſibi plebs blandiatur, quaſi immunis eſſe a contagio delicti poſſit, cum ſacerdote peccatore communicans——propter quod plebs obſequens præceptis dominicis, & Deum metuens, a peccatore præpoſito ſeparare ſe debet, nec ſe ad ſacrilegi ſacerdotis ſacerdotia miſcere; quando ipſa maxime habeat poteſtatem vel eligendi dignos ſacerdotes, vel indignos recuſandi. *Epiſt.* 68.

The church of England requires *teſtimonials of the good life and converſation of candidates, can.* 34. *It appertaineth to the diſcipline of the church, that enquiry be made of evil miniſters, and that ſuch as are found guilty be depos'd*, art. 26.

Bp. *Bull* affirms, *The prieſt that is not cloath'd with righteouſneſs, though otherwiſe richly adorned with all the ornaments of humane and divine literature, and thoſe gilded over with the rays of a ſeraphick prudence and ſagacity, is yet but a naked, beggarly, deſpicable creature, of* NO AUTHORITY, *no intereſt, no uſe, or ſervice in the church of God.* Viſit. ſerm. 27.

[1] *Exod.* xxviii. 36. In theſe paſſages, the ſame thing is inſiſted on, and in as ſtrong terms as I have done; and, I preſume, I have not ſhew'd on this occaſion any other concern than what becomes a lover of truth and mankind. Throughout this diſcourſe I have endeavour'd to expreſs my ſelf in the moſt inoffenſive manner, and have the pleaſure to hope, I can diſturb no one but the BIGOT, and provoke no one but the GUILTY.

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rit, in faith, in purity [1]. And ſince nothing renders a man ſo contemptible as vice; nothing ſo impotent as PRIDE and PASSION, you will ever remember, how the apoſtle has deſcrib'd the goſpel miniſter, *blameleſs as the ſteward of God, not ſelf-will'd, not ſoon angry, not given to wine, no ſtriker, not given to filthy lucre, a lover of hoſpitality, a lover of good men, ſober, juſt, holy, temperate* [2].

Eſpecially let your deportment toward all men be HUMBLE. If you would have none deſpiſe you, you muſt treat none with ſcorn and neglect. Shew a GREATNESS OF SOUL in all your deſigns, and views, that nothing but the fair, the honourable, the generous may be the meaſure of your actions. And finally, conſider your BRETHREN in the miniſtry, as engag'd in the ſame intereſt with your ſelves. Rejoice in their uſefulneſs; ſupport their honourable deſigns; and SCORN a glory, which cannot ſhew it ſelf but in an eclipſe.

For a concluſion of all.

We CHARGE you, O men of God, *to keep* inviolable, *what is now committed to your truſt* [3]. We CHARGE *you before* this great aſſembly, and *the elect angels of God, that you obſerve theſe things doing nothing by partiality* [4]. We CHARGE *you before God and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall judge the quick and dead at his appearing and kingdom, preach the word, be inſtant in ſeaſon, out of ſeaſon, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long ſuffering and doctrine* [5], that *the blood of ſouls may not be requir'd at your hands* in that day [6]. I

[1] 1 *Tim.* iv. 12. [2] *Tit.* i. 7. [3] 1 *Tim.* vi. 20. [4] 1 *Tim.* v. 21. [5] 2 *Tim.* iv. 1, 2. [6] *Ezek.* xxxiii. 8, 9.

add to all my hearty wiſhes, that the great maſter of our aſſemblies, would make the heat and burthen of your day tolerable; your opportunities and ſucceſs great; and then reward your faithfulneſs with DISTINGUISH'D CROWNS.

To the People.

Having thus diſcharged my duty to my brethren, I hope this favourable audience will indulge me a word or two to them.

You have now ſeen our method of ordination, and it is, ſo far as we are able to judge, moſt agreeable to the inſtitution of a goſpel-miniſtry. The impoſition of hands was an antient ceremony, uſed, ſometimes in bleſſing a perſon, ſometimes in appointing to a particular office; as ſuch we uſe it on this occaſion. We find indeed in the New Teſtament, this action was generally accompanied with the conferring ſome extraordinary divine gift. But we diſclaim every ſuch pretence, and would not be thought to convey any *ſecret character or grace.* By this ſolemn action and prayer, we would recommend our brethren to God's bleſſing and your eſteem; hoping, after ſuch a publick teſtimony of our approbation, their labours will be more acceptable amongſt you. Some ſuch publick rite we judge to be regular and convenient, to prevent the intruſion of unqualified perſons into this office; further we durſt not preſume.

Our INTEREST, *chriſtian brethren*, is no leſs than the glorious cauſe of LIBERTY. A liberty to think and judge for our ſelves in matters of religion: a liberty to uſe the ſcriptures in our own language, and underſtand them in our own ſenſe, i. e. what, after ſincere enquiry, appears to us the true one: a liberty to chooſe our own miniſters, and

and order the worſhip of our churches, in that manner we think moſt agreeable to the will of God. We maintain theſe principles, as the unalienable rights of reaſonable beings, and profeſſors of that religion, which diſclaims all force, and impoſition on the underſtandings of mankind. We believe there can be no virtue without a perſonal choice; and no faith without a perſonal conviction. When cuſtoms and opinions are exempted from examination and cenſure, we apprehend, truth can have no diſtinction from error; or faith from impoſture. We therefore think our ſelves obliged, by all the regards we bear to God and his truth, to our ſouls and their ſalvation, to diſpute every ſuch IMPOSING POWER. A power that muſt be boundleſs and infinite, ſo long as it claims an authority to JUDGE, as well as impoſe. This is that liberty we profeſs; and it will be ſo much the dearer to us, as our *fathers* have always nobly defended it, and with the hazard of their lives conveyed it down to us. Stand faſt, *my brethren*, in that liberty wherewith you are made FREE, and let no temptation ever make you in love with a yoke of BONDAGE.

Whilſt I am encouraging a value for religious liberty, I would not forget a MORAL one, without which you can be happy in no condition. I mean the liberty of the mind, or its freedom from vicious habits and inclinations. This will reſtore the mind to it ſelf; to a right uſe of its powers, and an innocent enjoyment of its objects. To this we would bring you by our miniſtry, and beſeech you to concur with us in this deſign. 'Tis your danger makes our work ſo difficult. 'Tis your happineſs that makes it ſo important. We muſt therefore beg you, by your prayers, by your kind acceptance

tance of our labours, by your ready ſubjection to the goſpel of Chriſt, to help it forward. When once we can ſee the power of religion in your regular and chriſtian converſation, and ſay that you are the *ſeals of our miniſtry in the Lord*; then we ſhould rejoice. Yea, we ſhould ſcorn thoſe poor attempts to invalidate our orders, when we could ſay, ye are the EPISTLES OF CHRIST MINISTRED BY US. 2 *Cor.* iii. 3. If there be therefore any conſolation in Chriſt, if any comfort of love, if any fellowſhip of the ſpirit, if any bowels and mercies, endeavour this way to fulfil our joy. *Phil.* ii. 1.

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